RACE, CLASS, AND THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
GORDON S. WOOD

BUSH AND DEMOCRATIZATION
LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN, MARISA KATZ, MARINA OTTAWAY

THE NEW REPUBLIC

Summer Reading Issue

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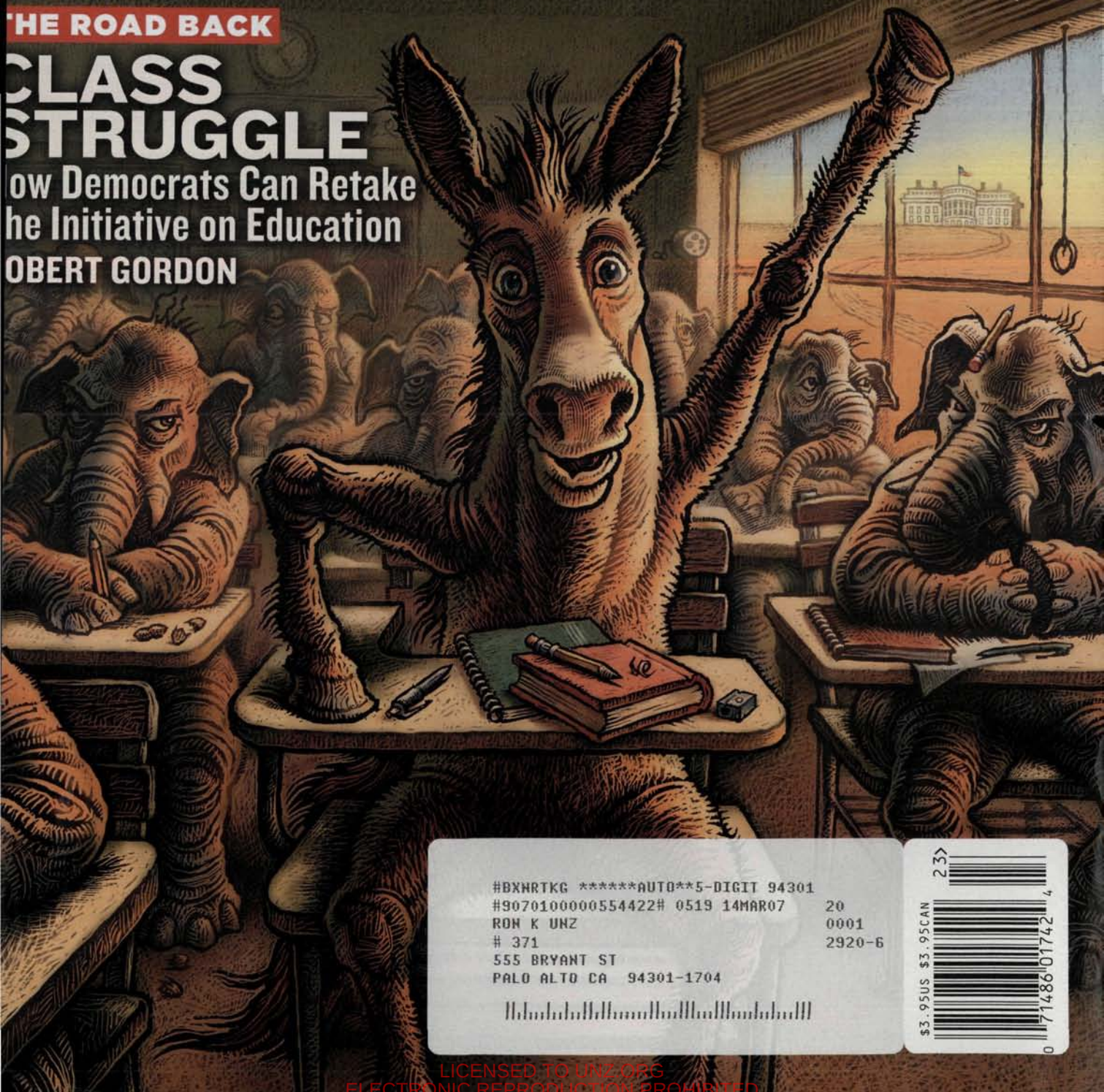
THE ROAD BACK

CLASS STRUGGLE

ow Democrats Can Retake
he Initiative on Education

OBERT GORDON



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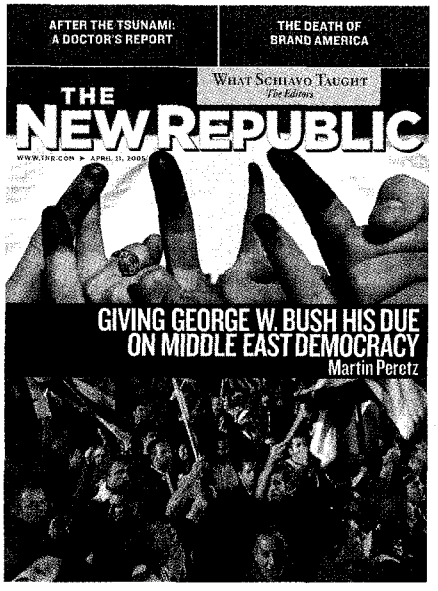
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GIVING GEORGE W. BUSH HIS DUE ON MIDDLE EAST DEMOCRACY
Martin Peretz

CHURLS

HONEST LIBERALS ARE WELL-AWARE of the intellectual difficulties they face, given recent news from the Middle East ("The Politics of Churlishness," April 11). It is heartening to see the region emerging from despotic stasis, but it is highly unpleasant to allow President Bush credit for what, as Martin Peretz points out, would not have taken place without his action. Experiencing such an inner conflict or withholding adulation from the president is not churlish; given the behavior of his administration, it is prudent and necessary. Ignoring the president's miscalculations in the preparation for and the execution of the Iraq war would be foolish and dangerous. The happy truth of blossoming liberalism in the Middle East does not erase the mistakes that cost unnecessary lives and treasure, and it does not absolve the president of his responsibility for those mistakes any more than our happy victory in World War II ought to preclude discussions of the rightness of firebombing Dresden or nuking Hiroshima. It is right to give credit where it is due, and it is right not to forget that success could have been achieved under better terms.

There are other good reasons to be skeptical of Bush. Peretz notes that Bush wisely saw how terrorism does not operate in a vacuum. Neither does domestic politics. Iraq is not the president's sole interest, and whatever wisdom he possessed regarding the Middle East does not necessarily translate into an ability to solve other problems. Democrats have a responsibility to fight the president where he is truly mistaken—on matters where THE NEW REPUBLIC has said as much—and showering him with praise does not help their cause. It may be a Machiavellian calculation, but that is the world in which Democrats live.

RYAN AVENT
Washington, D.C.

PERETZ SUFFERS FROM SELECTIVE attention: If your house is burning down, you don't praise the fireman for saving the doghouse. If Bush were getting these results for the same price his father paid for the first Iraq war (next to nothing), I'd call him a genius. But we're getting these results at a cost of $4 billion a month. You can't talk about democratization in the Middle East without mentioning the empowerment of China, which continues to increase military spending dramatically each year. And how "single-minded" is Bush's devotion to Middle East democracy in light of his caving on both the Greater and Broader Middle East initiatives, the types of programs that helped sow the seeds of democracy in Europe during the cold war? If Peretz wants us to acknowledge the positive events in Iraq and Lebanon, that's fine, but I hope these memories will be enough to sustain him in the tough years ahead.

JAKE HEWITT
Northbrook, Illinois

ONE CAN AGREE WITH MUCH OF Peretz's article and still be offend-

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ed by his failure to mention two essential problems: First, the administration generated support for military intervention by using a significant amount of deceit, particularly pertaining to WMD. Second, the Iraq war has now maimed or killed several times the number of Americans who were killed on September 11, and it is costing hundreds of billions of dollars. The first point speaks to how Bush prevented Congress and the American people from having an informed view of the likely costs and benefits of military action—thereby weakening U.S. democracy and casting a shadow of distrust over our executive branch for some time to come. The second point speaks to what the costs of military action have in fact been. One can like some of the results of Bush's hardheadedness while still questioning whether where it took us was—all things considered—worth it.

MATT SANDERS
Dallas, Texas

CRUEL INTENTIONS

I HAVE NOT YET READ THE JAMES Atlas memoir reviewed by James Wolcott, and this letter is not meant as a defense of Atlas's literary career ("Unlucky Jim," April 18). But, as a student of the demolition work of Dwight Macdonald, it does seem to me that this review is as much an ad hominem attack as it is literary criticism. Far too much space is devoted to largely speculative assertions concerning Atlas's morals, motives, values, and personal failings, many of which could be ascribed to all writers—and I suspect most readers. The desperate need to have one's work read and approved is hardly a unique form of obsessive ambition. Wolcott makes it clear that he has none of the bourgeois tastes of Atlas and doesn't care about the "New York literary world," that he avoids literary cocktail parties, that he presumably lives the life of the mind, and that he is, of course, ever without envy. One waits breathlessly for his memoir. It should also be noted that Atlas's biography of Saul Bellow was devastatingly assaulted by James Wood in these same pages. Wolcott dutifully cites and quotes from the Wood piece, completing a kind of literary double indemnity. Is TNR harboring some kind of personal vendetta?

MICHAEL WRESZIN
New York, New York

JAMES WOLCOTT RESPONDS:
If Michael Wreszin is comparing me to Dwight Macdonald, whose funny, pugnacious correspondence he so ably edited in *A Moral Temper*, I am flattered, though evidently flattery wasn't his intention. I'm afraid Wreszin misunderstands me on several key—and yet, in the cosmic scheme of things, irrelevant—matters. It isn't that I don't care about the "New York literary world." It's that I don't believe it exists, except as a sort of lost Brigadoon shrouded in the cigarette smoke of old *Partisan Review* gatherings. It isn't that I avoid literary parties out of inverse snobbery, it's that I don't believe that attending lots of them or the "right ones" qualifies a person for upgrade status to the first-class compartment. But enough about me and my conceits. Perhaps, when Wreszin has time to curl up with *My Life in the Middle Ages*, he, too, will discover that ineffable something in Atlas's writing that so irresistibly gets on one's nerves. ■

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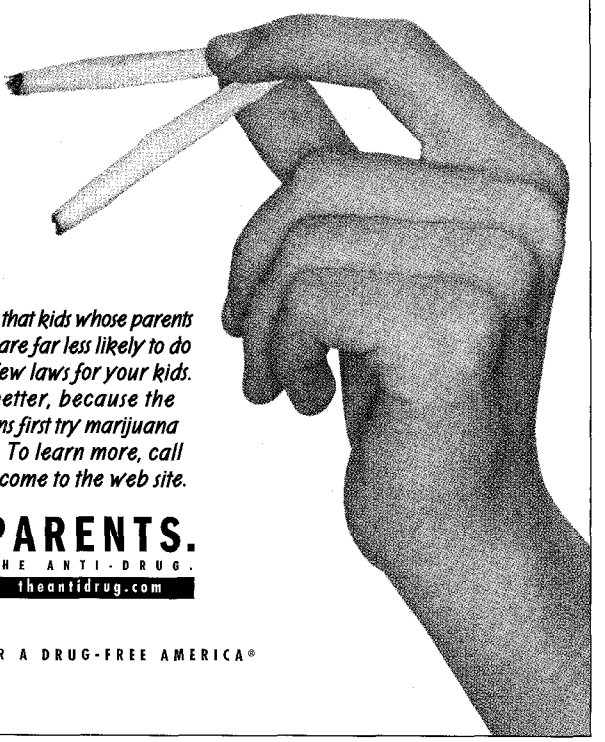

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Business Card

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FROM WASHINGTON

THERE'S A PARADOX AT THE heart of the Senate's last-minute filibuster deal. On the one hand, most observers believe Senate Democrats had neither the votes nor the public outrage necessary to prevent Republicans from deploying the so-called nuclear option. On the other, the conventional wisdom among both liberals and conservatives is that Democrats got the better end of the bargain. As conservative legal journalist Mark Levin sneered on *National Review Online*, "[W]e've gained 3 judges we would have gained had the rule been changed, lost 2 we would have otherwise gained, and the filibuster lives."

If Republicans were holding most of the cards, how on earth did Democrats come out ahead? The answer is that not all the cards were accounted for. In pushing the Senate to the brink, Democrats directly threatened what remains the most important GOP interest group today: big business.

It's easy to see how Republicans could have lost sight of how heavily they depend on business interests to fuel their electoral successes. On one level, George W. Bush's reelection had little to do with economics. Instead, Bush won a second term by relying on his national security bona fides to attract swing voters and by exciting his base with conservative positions on gay marriage and abortion.

But it was business that invested an unprecedented amount of money in Republicans last fall. (Corporate PACs gave $159 million to the GOP, versus $81 million to Democrats, according to the Center for Responsive Politics.) And, when it came time for Bush to reward these interest groups, he discovered his first-term political strategy had left him unable to deliver.

Despite their majorities in the House and Senate, Republicans simply don't have the votes to pass their Social Security, trade, or immigration proposals without help from Democrats—the increasingly blue-collar and nativist cast of the GOP precludes that. And, unfortunately for the GOP, Bush spent the first four years of his presidency alienating moderate Democrats with his slash-and-burn legislative tactics, his radical foreign policy, and his appeals to social conservatism. If not for all the bad will Bush engendered, New Democrats might have supported some of his second-term proposals. In 1999, a Pew Research Center study found that, although New Dems were socially liberal, they favored investing Social Security funds in the stock market, less restrictive trade laws, and cuts in capital gains taxes—all popular items in the business community.

But a recently updated version of the Pew poll reveals that the New Democrats no longer exist as a type. The practical effect of Bush's radicalism has been to drive them into the arms of liberal Democrats, whose share of the electorate has doubled. Today, the former New Democrats reject Bush's agenda largely on partisan grounds. According to Pew, for example, Democratic support for means-testing Social Security drops 20 percentage points once Bush's name is attached to it. And the Central American Free Trade Agreement has languished on the Hill since the House New Democratic Caucus came out against it.

Of course, even as these high-profile priorities have stalled, Democrats have occasionally cooperated with the GOP when certain business interests lobbied them aggressively. In March, for example, 14 Democrats voted to prevent a filibuster of a bill tightening bankruptcy laws, clearing the measure for passage. If nothing else, K Street assumed it could continue to rack up wins using these ad hoc coalitions.

But that assumption fell apart when the second major consequence of Bush's first-term political strategy—emboldened social conservatives—reared its ugly head. Earlier this year, conservative evangelical leaders, convinced that Bush owed them his reelection, began petitioning the Republican leadership for a showdown over judges. In response, Democrats threatened to slow Senate activity to a halt, informing K Street that the chief casualty could be its still-unfulfilled agenda. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported last month, Democratic Senators Tom Carper and Herb Kohl warned three major business groups—the Business Roundtable, the Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM)—not to expect any favors from Democrats if the GOP turned "the Senate into a rubber stamp for the president." The leaders of all three groups promptly told Bill Frist they were sitting out his filibuster fight.

Eventually, the inability to find Democratic allies for ambitious Bush initiatives, combined with the prospect of a Senate so deadlocked it jeopardized one-time sure bets, such as bills limiting asbestos liability and medical malpractice awards, demoralized the business community. In a column for *National Review Online* last Friday, economist Larry Kudlow sighed, "Hopes were high [after the election] that little could stop the implementation of a true conservative agenda, one that featured supply-side economic reform, investor-owned Social Security reform ... legal-abuse-curbing tort reform. ... But the hoped-for domestic-reform agenda has gone nowhere." As time wore on, the business wing of the GOP began to shift from neutrality on the filibuster question to outright opposition. Last week, according to *The Washington Post*, NAM announced it hoped that "leveler heads prevail"—a message Republicans surely heard.

There is a valuable lesson here: Over the last decade, the GOP has increasingly attracted voters who care more about social issues than libertarian economic policies. In fact, according to Pew, a majority of Republicans now believe that too much power is concentrated in the hands of a few large companies. Yet the GOP raises increasing amounts of corporate cash. That forces the party to push policies fewer and fewer of its constituents consider high priorities—in one famous example this January, a group of high-profile religious conservatives told the White House they had serious reservations about Social Security privatization—and leaves the GOP vulnerable to Democratic intransigence despite its majority in Congress.

In the aftermath of the filibuster deal, Republicans claimed they retain the right to go nuclear if Democrats don't keep their end of the bargain. But, in light of the context in which the compromise came about, it's not clear they can afford to.

NOAM SCHEIBER

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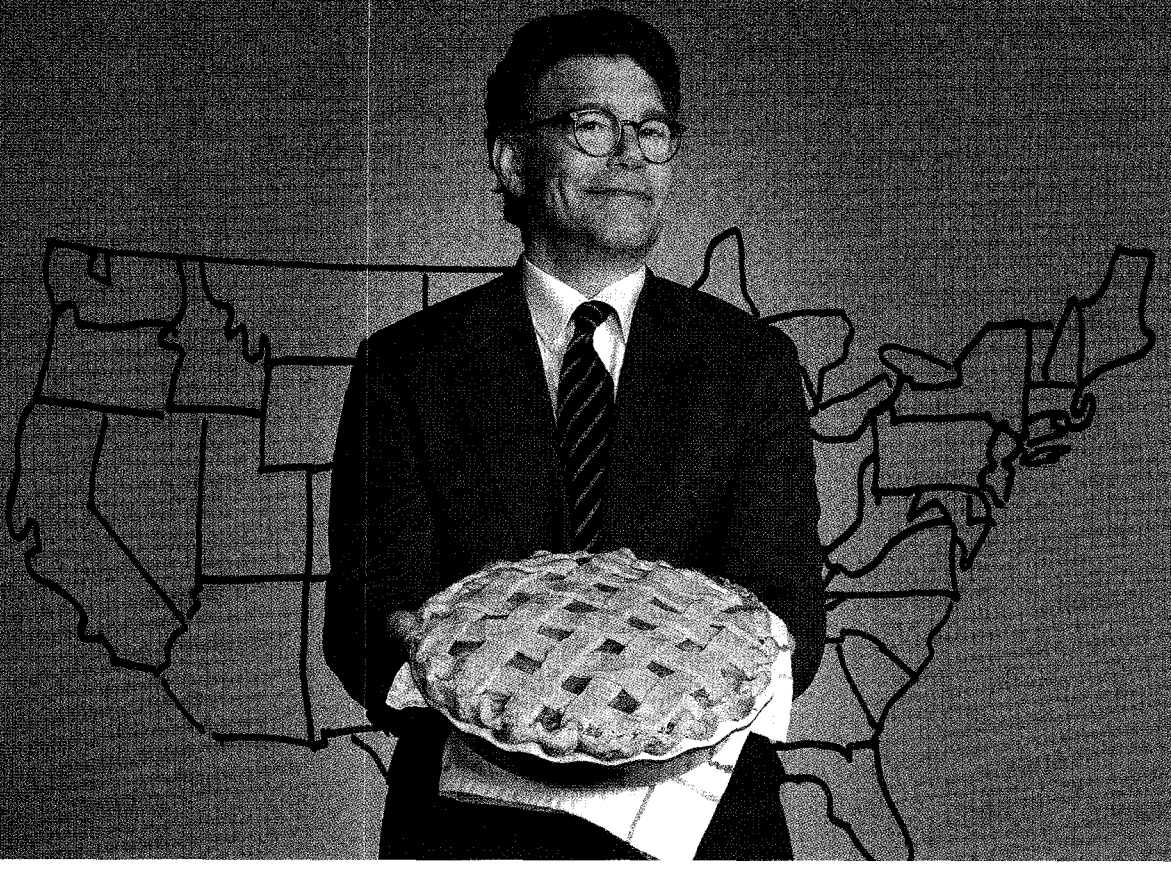

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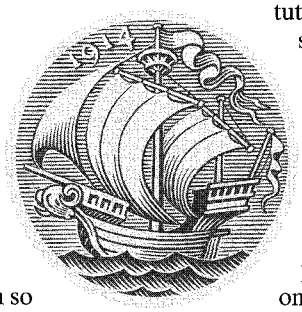
Moderate Excess

WHEN THE AMERICANS and the Soviets retreated from the brink of nuclear war after the Cuban missile crisis, jubilation followed. The world had not ended! Life would go on! But, of course, that was hardly the end of the story. There was still the matter of the cold war to settle. Similarly, the Senate's retreat this week from its own nuclear confrontation, in the form of a compromise crafted by 14 so-called moderates, is grounds for some Democratic relief. Republicans were denied a total victory, and they failed to set the alarming precedent of changing Senate rules by fiat. But, just as John F. Kennedy knew the Soviets were hardly vanquished, so Harry Reid knows that the war is not won. And, while he's been publicly praising the moderates who cut this deal, we wonder whether he will not come to curse them.

This compromise was a classic case of moderate deal-making in Washington—and we don't mean that as a compliment. Congressional moderates are forever celebrated for "bucking their parties" and "standing on principle," regardless of what they actually accomplish (or what principle they stand on). In recent years, their pathetic "victories" include trimming the first Bush tax cut from an insane $1.6 trillion to a merely outlandish $1.3 trillion; forcing an extremely modest reduction of Medicaid cuts in this year's budget; and, as Noam Scheiber pointed out last week ("Norm!" May 30), lamenting John Bolton's nomination as U.N. ambassador without actually blocking it.

All these episodes were treated as triumphal achievements, and so was this week's defusing of the nuclear option. A typical story in *The Washington Post* declared it "an extraordinary moment" for the moderates, who "have demonstrated that there is an alternative to the partisan polarization that has been so much in favor in both parties." A *Post* editorial proclaimed the deal "a great achievement," saying the 14 Senate deal-makers "managed to put principle above self-protection."

Really? We fail to see how that's true. Compromise itself, after all, is not a principle. And the chief principle at stake—that every extremist should not be elevated to the federal bench—has been trammeled. Nor has the life of the filibuster (itself not a principle either, just a procedural tool) been guaranteed. Signatories merely agreed to filibuster future nominations only in "extraordinary circumstances." Everything depends on the interpretation of this absurdly fuzzy clause—a matter upon which Republicans and Democrats will most certainly differ. Which means what the moderates have come up with is not a resolution so much as a postponement.



The moderates have done something else typically maddening. They have redefined the center of debate to the rightward position demanded by the pull of Republican extremists. Back in the Clinton years, the idea that a president could shove judges down Congress's throat was a foreign one. Republicans clearly thought so, because they used all manner of blocking tactics (albeit less visible ones than the filibuster) to stop dozens of Clinton nominees. Sure, Democrats howled in protest. But they never resorted to changing Senate rules.

In the Bush era, by contrast, Republicans have gradually removed various means of blocking judges and mounted a fierce assault on the filibuster. The filibuster still holds, for the moment. But allowing the confirmation of three radical Bush nominees—Priscilla Owen, Janice Rogers Brown, and William Pryor—in exchange for a Democratic promise to filibuster only in "extraordinary circumstances" created a false equivalence between the extremity of the GOP's approach and the Democrats' simple adherence to Senate rules.

Moreover, when the filibuster fight comes to a head again—as it will—the Democrats' task will be made all the more difficult not only by the need to demonstrate "extraordinary circumstances," but by the implication that the three Bush nominees the deal effectively confirmed, whom the liberal establishment treated as something close to worst-case picks, did not constitute "extraordinary circumstances." That sets the bar awfully high. (Even some conservatives have fretted over Brown's one-time suggestion that she observes a higher law than the Constitution.) Furthermore, what happens should Bush choose one of these three to fill the next Supreme Court vacancy?

The answers to these questions all seem to favor the Republicans. There may be grounds for Democratic relief that Bill Frist was not able to steamroll them completely. But the terms of the moderates' deal, unfortunately, should be seen less as a triumph over the extremes than a triumph of the extremes. ■

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NOTEBOOK

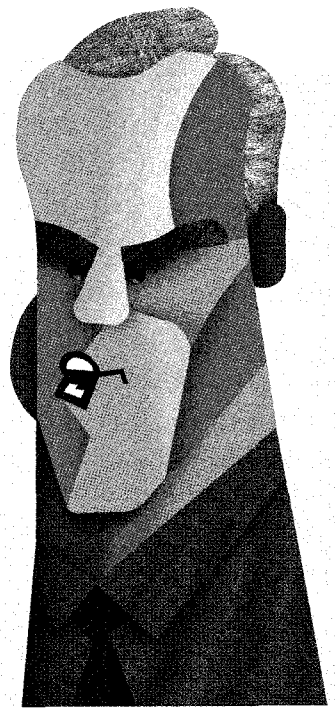
PREJUDGING TOM DELAY . . . 'JUST SAY NO,' THE AFGHAN WAY

DEAN IDIOCY WATCH

THE IDEA OF TOM DELAY expressing righteous indignation over anything these days is preposterous. But there was DeLay, or rather his spokesperson, ripping into Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chairman Howard Dean this week for Dean's comments about the embattled House majority leader: "Leading a party with no ideas, no solutions, and no agenda, Howard Dean's latest antics, which previously earned him a rebuke from his own party, shows the sad state the Democrats have sunk to." People can quibble over whether the Democrats have no ideas, no solutions, and no agenda; but there is, alas, no denying DeLay's point about the idiocy of the Democratic Party's titular head.

The antics to which DeLay's flack was responding occurred on last Sunday's "Meet the Press." Host Tim Russert had asked the DNC chair whether he was slandering DeLay when, in a speech to a Democratic group a few weeks earlier, he said: "I think Tom DeLay ought to go back to Houston, where he can serve his jail sentence down there courtesy of the Texas taxpayers." Rather than concede that he might have gotten a bit ahead of himself, Dean dug in. "I don't think I'm prejudging him," Dean replied before ticking off all of DeLay's various transgressions and noting that the representative is under investigation by a Texas district attorney for violating campaign finance laws. "Now, the question is," Dean continued, "where is this going to end up? I think there's a reasonable chance that this may end up in jail."

Maybe. But it's hardly the DNC chair's place to be making predictions about what a judge and a jury might decide—especially since DeLay hasn't actually been indicted! "You don't have to be unfair to be tough," Massachusetts Representative Barney Frank told *The New York Times* when asked about



Howard Dean

Dean's comments. "And you don't have to overstate and really be unfair to people to get your ideological allies energized. It's just inappropriate." Not to mention counterproductive.

BORDERLINE INSANITY

IS THE UNITED STATES VISITOR AND Immigrant Status Indicator Technology, or US-VISIT, about to become the Star Wars of homeland security projects—that is, a technologically infeasible program that gets showered with billions in government largesse? The initial indications look promising. To recap, the basic idea behind US-VISIT is to use biometric identification like fingerprints to track foreigners seeking to enter the United States and to cross-reference their identities with terrorist watch lists. The 9/11 Commission called the program "an essential investment in our national security" that nonetheless represents a "major and expensive challenge."

But it's difficult to say exactly how major and expensive. As *The Washington Post* reported this week, the company the Department of Homeland Security brought in to develop the program, Accenture, doesn't have any idea what the system will ultimately look like or how it will operate, but it holds a government contractor's dream: an "indefinite delivery–indefinite quantity" contract. In fact, Accenture, which just happened to advise the US-VISIT office director on how to put the contract out for bid, went on to win it largely on the strength of a whiz-bang demonstration that the company's representatives told the *Post* in no way "represent[s] what the final US-VISIT solution will look like." Government auditors have warned that US-VISIT is likely to cost "tens of billions" of dollars and rests on technologically dubious foundations, such as the former Immigration and Naturalization Service's computer network, which is so poorly integrated with the FBI's databases that it "creates a risk that a terrorist could enter the country undetected," according to the Justice Department's inspector general.

But not to worry. House Republicans have some lower-tech solutions to harden the borders. First, deny aliens the right to challenge their deportation. As United Press International reported, the Justice Department last week cited provisions of the just-passed REAL ID Act—pushed by House Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner—in arguing that federal judges can't hear the petition of a Togolese woman seeking to overturn her 1998 deportation order. (The Convention Against Torture prevents sending someone to a country where, as in Togo, torture is practiced.) And, if that doesn't work, there's always the military option: A report issued this week by the GOP's Congressional Immigration Reform Caucus urged the deployment of 36,000 National Guardsmen or state militiamen to the Mexican border. (Hey, it's not like there's a war on.)

DAVID COWLES

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It's all enough to make us think the House GOP is engaged in a cunning ruse to make US-VISIT look like a sober allocation of resources.

KABUL KABUKI

POOR HAMID KARZAI. NOT ONLY does the Afghan president have to administer an impoverished and lawless land emerging from decades of war and oppression, largely reliant on foreign aid and foreign troops, but he has to pretend to be happy when the Bush administration refuses his requests and chastises him for not putting U.S. priorities ahead of his own people's.

Last winter, Karzai rebuffed U.S. efforts to launch a poppy eradication program in Afghanistan that would have used aerial spraying, citing health risks and enraged farmers. Instead, he promised to fight opium cultivation with an "Afghan solution," asking people to destroy their crops in the hope of receiving foreign aid. That didn't endear him to the Bush administration. Nor did his request, during a White House visit this week, for greater say over U.S. military operations in Afghanistan. President Bush didn't budge, and he also took the opportunity to remind Karzai that "there's too much poppy cultivation in Afghanistan."

Yet, the next day, there was Karzai telling the *Post*, "We are happy with what the United States is doing in Afghanistan" and adding that Taliban fighters and local warlords are "no worry." Then, however, Karzai did something few heads of state ever do: He broke the fourth wall, asking the reporters, "How do you expect me to criticize [the United States]?" How indeed.

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

"THE END OF WAR?" by Gregg Easterbrook (May 30) implied that journalist Robert Kaplan visited Eritrea at the end of its war of independence against Ethiopia, during the early '90s. Kaplan visited the region in the late '80s. We regret the error. ■

TNR.commentary

&c.

T.A. FRANK

CENTER FOLDS: So a deal has been struck on the filibuster. Republicans will allow Democrats to keep it as long as Democrats never use it. This way, both sides win (except for the Democrats).

Once again, the Republicans have shown their skill at resetting parameters. Until recently, the perception was that Bush had consistently filled the courts with extreme conservatives, with only a handful of truly batty nominees failing to meet the standards of Democrats. Now, facing the threat of the nuclear option, Democrats have backed down on these as well. Thanks to a willingness to "rise above politics" (Robert Byrd's words), there's a new agreement under which, presumably, only the certifiably insane can be blocked—or, to put it as the senators did, nominees can "only be filibustered under extraordinary circumstances." That way, if Bush's pick for a judgeship goes too far even for Republicans—if he nominates, say, an Irish setter who, during confirmation hearings, runs up and bites Orrin Hatch on the leg—then Democrats will be allowed to play the bad guys. Otherwise, they'd better hold off, or Republicans might have to take the filibuster away for real.

By bracketing the debate between two right-wing extremes—confirm every nominee except for a handful or confirm every nominee through use of the nuclear option—the Republicans had won before they'd even begun.

Meanwhile, skilled negotiators that they are, Republicans have been wise enough not to gloat. "It has some good news and it has some disappointing news, and it will require careful monitoring," says Bill Frist, admirably feigning disappointment. Meanwhile, Democrats, who must now permit the confirmation of some truly radical judges, don't feel humiliated. They speak as if they've won. "In a Senate that is increasingly polarized, the bipartisan center held," Joe Lieberman proudly announced. And here's Democratic Whip Richard Durbin of Illinois: "There is nothing more exhilarating than being shot at and missed."

Exhilarating indeed. Can someone please resurrect the Whigs?

SMALL FRY: The Raleigh *News & Observer* reports that North Carolina Representative Walter B. Jones Jr. now regrets having invented the term "freedom fries" and says we went to war "with no justification." Jones, a Republican, is also unhappy with the White House: "If we were given misinformation intentionally by people in this administration, to commit the authority to send boys, and in some instances girls, to go into Iraq, that is wrong." He has also spoken up frequently for American soldiers, including Ilario Pantano, a Marine lieutenant accused of wrongfully shooting and killing two Iraqis: "I'd have him for my son."

Contrast this with the secretary of defense, who has divorced himself from the actions of any low-level soldiers accused of wrongdoing. Even as reports of torture steadily surface, from Guantánamo to Bagram, Donald Rumsfeld refuses to assume responsibility. As he told Larry King, "What was going on in the midnight shift in Abu Ghraib Prison halfway across the world is something that clearly someone in Washington, D.C., can't manage or deal with. And so I have no regrets."

Meanwhile, thanks to the troop levels Rumsfeld authorized for Iraq, here are some of the problems faced by the soldiers brought in to police Abu Ghraib, according to last year's Schlesinger report:

> Personnel interviewed described being placed immediately in stressful situations in a detention facility with thousands of non-compliant detainees and not being trained to handle them. ... [R]elevant Army manuals and publications were available only on-line, but personnel did not have access to computers or the Internet. ...
>
> The detainee population of approximately 7,000 out-manned the 92 [military personnel] by approximately a 75:1 ratio. ...
>
> Five U.S. soldiers died as a result of mortar attacks on Abu Ghraib. In July 2003, Abu Ghraib was mortared 25 times; on August 16, 2003, five detainees were killed and 67 wounded in a mortar attack. A mortar attack on April 20, 2004 killed 22 detainees. ...
>
> Some of the abusers believed other governmental agencies were conducting interrogations using harsher techniques than allowed by the Army Field Manual 34–52, a perception leading to the belief that such methods were condoned. ...
>
> Lack of crew-served weapons, e.g., machine guns and mortars to counter external attacks resulted in casualties to the detainee population as well as to the friendly forces.

But, of course, Rummy can't possibly hope to "manage or deal with" this sort of thing. I wonder if he put that in his cover letter when he applied for the job.

TNR REPORTER-RESEARCHER T.A. FRANK IS CURRENTLY GUEST-BLOGGING *&C.* READ MORE OF HIS POSTS AND OTHER TNR ONLINE CONTENT AT TNR.COM

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China is not the answer.

Red Herring

BY JOSHUA KURLANTZICK

Arm in arm: Wu Bangguo didn't confront Kim Jong Il (right).

BEIJING, CHINA

DURING THE COURSE of the six-party talks—as the discussions between North Korea, the United States, Russia, China, South Korea, and Japan about ending Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program are called—Washington has increasingly leaned on Beijing for help. Hosting the talks here, China has engaged in rounds of shuttle diplomacy, sending top officials to Pyongyang to lure the unpredictable North Koreans to the negotiating table. Meanwhile, as North Korea has become even more menacing—some Korea experts have grown concerned in recent weeks that the North may be preparing for a nuclear test—American officials have increasingly called on China to step up pressure on the North, hoping that Beijing's leverage over its traditional ally and economic client-state can help force North Korea into a deal that would eliminate its nuclear program. "China, in particular, has an important role to play [with the North]," said Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during her March visit to Asia. To emphasize her point, one State Department official told *The New York Times* that the major job of Rice's visit was to push China to squeeze the North. Then, in early May, *The Washington Post* reported that Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill had asked China to cut off supplies of oil to Pyongyang to push the North Koreans back to the negotiating table. (China is North Korea's major energy supplier.) "China is the last, best hope" for ending the nuclear standoff, another State Department official told me, echoing the conventional wisdom among many at Foggy Bottom.

But Washington has far too optimistic a view of China's intentions. Unlike the United States, say Chinese officials and scholars, China appears unwilling to pressure North Korea on human rights and the North's nuclear program—and even appears willing to live with a nuclear North, a view few American officials share. U.S. pressure is unlikely to change China's mind. "The U.S. doesn't have any additional leverage over China on North Korea," says Han Park, a Korea specialist at the University of Georgia who has made many trips to Beijing and Pyongyang. Worse, by continuing to serve as an intermediary while doing little to actually promote progress, Beijing is boosting its diplomatic image in the region while helping ensure that the U.S. image continues to crumble.

FROM EARLY IN the six-party talks, which commenced in 2003, China was given a central role—a break from previous crises in Asia, when China tended to take a backseat. Beijing publicly announced that it supported a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula, and Chinese officials have traveled back and forth from Pyongyang, proudly broadcasting the North's intentions to bargain in good faith. After the first round of talks went nowhere, China sent its number-two leader, Wu Bangguo, to Pyongyang; Beijing also allegedly gave the North $50 million in economic aid. Upon his return, the Chinese press exhaustively reported that Wu had gotten North Korea to return to the table. Then, in early 2004, after the talks stumbled again, Beijing hosted the Dear Leader himself, who reportedly came to meet with Chinese officials about the nuclear standoff. After the visit, Beijing announced that, "in a friendly and candid atmosphere," China had persuaded Kim Jong Il to adopt "a broad common understanding" that he must make his "own contributions" to ending the nuclear face-off.

This diplomacy has earned Beijing glowing reviews, both from its Asian neighbors and even from many Western officials. "On the issue of the North Korean nuclear crisis, China ... has won praise from the international community," boasted Tao Wenzhao, a leading Chinese scholar. Throughout 2003 and 2004, many Asian news outlets essentially portrayed China as a rational actor mediating between two angry, almost unbalanced nations—North Korea and the United States. Polls taken by the BBC in 2004 suggested that, throughout Asia, most people had a more positive image of China than they did of the United States. "Clearly, China's international image has been enhanced by the earnestness with which it has approached the North Korean issue and by the amount of work its offi-

XINHUA, WANG YAN/AP WIDEWORLD

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cials have put into it," wrote Frank Ching, a leading Hong Kong–based commentator on Asian affairs. Even in the West, China has garnered praise. "I think we should really focus on the positive aspects of [the six-party talks], including the absolutely rightful role of China," Aleksandr Ilitchev, a U.N. expert on North Korea, told a panel at the Brookings Institution this winter. "The talks clearly are of great advantage to the Chinese—of great diplomatic benefit to them," one former American official involved in China policy admitted to me.

Yet, as the talks have foundered—no six-party meetings have been held in nearly a year and intelligence suggests that the North Koreans not only possess several nuclear weapons but may also have sold nuclear components to Libya—faith in China has proved misguided. Last fall, when then–Secretary of State Colin Powell traveled to Asia in an attempt to unite Japan, South Korea, Russia, the United States, and China around a tougher stance toward the North, the Chinese foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, told the United States to "adopt a flexible and practical attitude on the issue." During her March trip, Rice reportedly received no assurances from the Chinese that they would boost pressure on the North, and, according to the *Post*, China rejected Hill's recent suggestion to cut North Korea's fuel supplies. In fact, while one former American official says that "the Chinese are much more worried about the North Korean nuclear program than a year ago," China has continued to publicly cast doubt on U.S. intelligence reports that North Korea is making nuclear weapons. In March, the *Times* reported that, when a Japanese reporter asked Li whether North Korea had produced nuclear fuel from enriched uranium, the foreign minister sarcastically answered, "I think that here you may know more than I do. ... I definitely don't know any more than you do." Then, the *Times* reported that a Chinese diplomat laid the blame on the White House for the failure to bring Pyongyang back to the bargaining table and denied there was any evidence North Korea was planning to test a nuke. Worse, China has continued its shipments of coal, oil, and grain to North Korea, extending the regime a lifeline as its economy spirals further downward; China now allegedly supplies at least 80 percent of North Korea's energy. And, as John Tkacik of the Heritage Foundation has noted, the Chinese have actually started praising the North more in recent days, with Chinese President Hu Jintao prompting Beijing's Propaganda Ministry to issue a long report defending North Korea.

Perhaps American officials shouldn't be surprised: If they looked more closely, they would see that China and the United States simply have different interests regarding North Korea. The United States has placed a priority on highlighting North Korea's grotesque human rights record, with Congress passing a comprehensive North Korean human rights act last year and top officials, including the president, routinely deriding the dictatorship's brutality. But, as China's position on North Korean rights shows, Beijing still prefers propping up Kim to taking any steps that might threaten his regime or enshrine the idea that it is acceptable for foreign countries to interfere with a nation's domestic human rights practice—a precedent that, if turned on Beijing, could have disastrous implications for the Chinese regime. What's more, Beijing worries that Kim's fall might boost refugee flows into China, where there are already some 300,000 Korean refugees living underground. Most of these refugees are in China's Northeast, where there is a large—and often sympathetic—ethnic Korean Chinese population.

The Northeast is also the center of China's Rust Belt, a region of formerly state-run heavy industries shutting down because they can't compete as China opens its economy. In the Rust Belt, unemployment is rife and labor protests are spreading rapidly. It's an area with hundreds of closed factories that makes Flint, Michigan, look like Eden; according to Chinese police documents acquired by the RAND Corporation, there are now over 50,000 public protests per year in China, with the Northeast being the locus of anger—anger Beijing doesn't want to feed by adding more people to the area. "The refugee flow could have an impact on China's internal security," says one veteran Chinese foreign ministry official who admits that the refugees are a major factor in China's North Korea policy. "We're definitely worried about lots of refugees entering China and creating instability in [the Northeast]." That's why, he notes, China has replaced the regular border police who used to patrol the North Korean border with troops from the People's Liberation Army. And, "the more you highlight North Korean refugees internationally, the more China closes the border," says one aid worker with extensive contacts in North Korea and China's Northeast.

Indeed, China has not only sent army units to the border and rounded up fleeing North Koreans, but it refuses to even call the North Koreans refugees, despite evidence of a horrendous gulag system within the North. (Great Britain's *Daily Telegraph* has reported that, at some gulag camps set up for refugees repatriated from China, North Korean guards kill the babies of women returned from across the border.) China has also declined any help in dealing with the refugees that would draw further attention to their plight. One former American official involved in North Korea policy says that, when Washington proposed setting up United Nations–monitored camps in neighboring Mongolia for North Korean refugees (so they could move through China to Mongolia and on to South Korea), the Chinese killed the idea and essentially barred the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees from operating in Northeast China.

China not only sees human rights differently, it can, more important, live with a nuclear North Korea, which it sees as a threat more to the United States than to itself, and which it views as less scary than a united Korea dominated by South Koreans. "North Korea's nuclear bomb is less threatening to China than to the U.S.," bluntly admits one Chinese foreign ministry official. Shen Dingli, a

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respected scholar at Shanghai's Fudan University agrees, noting that China will accept a nuclear North Korea, as long as Pyongyang does not conduct a public nuclear test. "Beijing may not welcome nuclear weapons development by [North Korea] ... but it can understand why North Korea may decide to acquire them," he argues, adding that Beijing's interest is served more by a divided Korean Peninsula. Indeed, when Chinese scholars like Zhang Liangui, a professor at the Central Party School in Beijing, have published articles in Chinese journals suggesting that China should not tolerate a nuclear North—and that Beijing apply more pressure to Pyongyang—the journals have been shut down and the articles have vanished from the Internet.

DESPITE DENIALS BY some Chinese officials, Beijing does possess leverage over its Stalinist neighbor. In February, when North Korea declared it would withdraw from the six-party talks, Beijing showed some resolve: China's official press, which usually reflects the government's desires, openly expressed anger with the North, a rare outcry. Pyongyang quickly reversed its position and said it was willing to return to the table. While the Chinese press was censuring Pyongyang, Kim Ha Joong, South Korea's ambassador to Beijing, mused, "What kind of situation would happen [in North Korea] if China blocked just three of its roads [into the North] at once?"

But there are few signs Beijing has any plans to change its Northern strategy, though Chinese officials suggest that there is internal debate about the future of North Korea policy, and, as one State Department official says, China clearly has prepared contingency plans should the Kim regime collapse of its own accord. "Beijing cannot say that it has no leverage. ... But Beijing has to answer a question: Would it be smart for China to apply any leverage it has?" Shen notes in the March issue of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*.

Perhaps, then, it may be time for Washington to realize it can't rely on China and to act accordingly. Washington could make it clearer that one of the consequences of not solving the problem could be a regional arms race (Japan has already stepped up its military-to-military cooperation with the United States), something China would like to avoid, since it might involve Taiwan going nuclear. And Washington could ultimately bring the North Korean nuclear issue to the U.N. Security Council, which would force China to publicly veto a resolution on the North and would end the diplomatic benefit Beijing reaps from the six-party talks. "China doesn't want to look irresponsible, because they see themselves as an international power. Anything that calls them to account publicly might work," says Dan Blumenthal, a China expert at the American Enterprise Institute. After all, when one round of the six-party negotiations yielded no results, Chinese spokesman Kong Quan announced that "just having talks was progress." For one nation, at least, it is. ■

Islamists and democracy.

Keep the Faith

BY MARINA OTTAWAY

POLITICAL CHANGE IS coming to the Middle East. Countries that slumbered for decades with no sign of political evolution are finally awakening. The Egyptian National Assembly has approved a constitutional amendment to allow direct, competitive presidential elections—a first in that country's history. Syrian troops left Lebanon when mass demonstrations signaled the people's discontent with their lack of power under the status quo. Iraq elected a government (albeit as a result of U.S. occupation rather than a renewal of Iraqi politics). Political competition has become possible in Palestine and will undoubtedly increase ahead of this summer's elections for the Legislative Council. Even Saudi Arabia has held elections—for powerless local councils, to be sure, and without the participation of women, but elections nevertheless. Only a few Arab countries—most notably Tunisia, Libya, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates—appear immune to the stirrings of change.

There are many reasons for this budding political activism, including the sheer magnitude of socioeconomic transformation in recent decades, which leaves static governments increasingly out of sync with their rapidly changing societies; satellite television, which has deprived Arab governments of their traditional monopoly over information; and the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and the death of Yasir Arafat. But the Bush administration certainly contributed to this political ferment, in ways both intentional and not. By announcing his determination to bring democracy to the Arab world, the president triggered a lively debate about democracy in the region's press—a debate that started by questioning Bush's credibility and denouncing democracy promotion as a thinly veiled justification for the Iraq war but that soon admitted that Bush's hypocrisy did not excuse the absence of democracy in the Middle East.

Most Arab governments, faced with the Bush administration's rhetorical onslaught, thought it prudent to respond by introducing some mild reforms that would not threaten their power, hoping to avoid real pressure to change. Liberal reformers are now grudgingly admitting that perhaps U.S. pressure is not a bad thing. The just-published 2004 U.N. Arab Human Development Report, for example, concludes that even policies as fundamentally flawed as the intervention in Iraq and as hypocritical as Washington's criticism of

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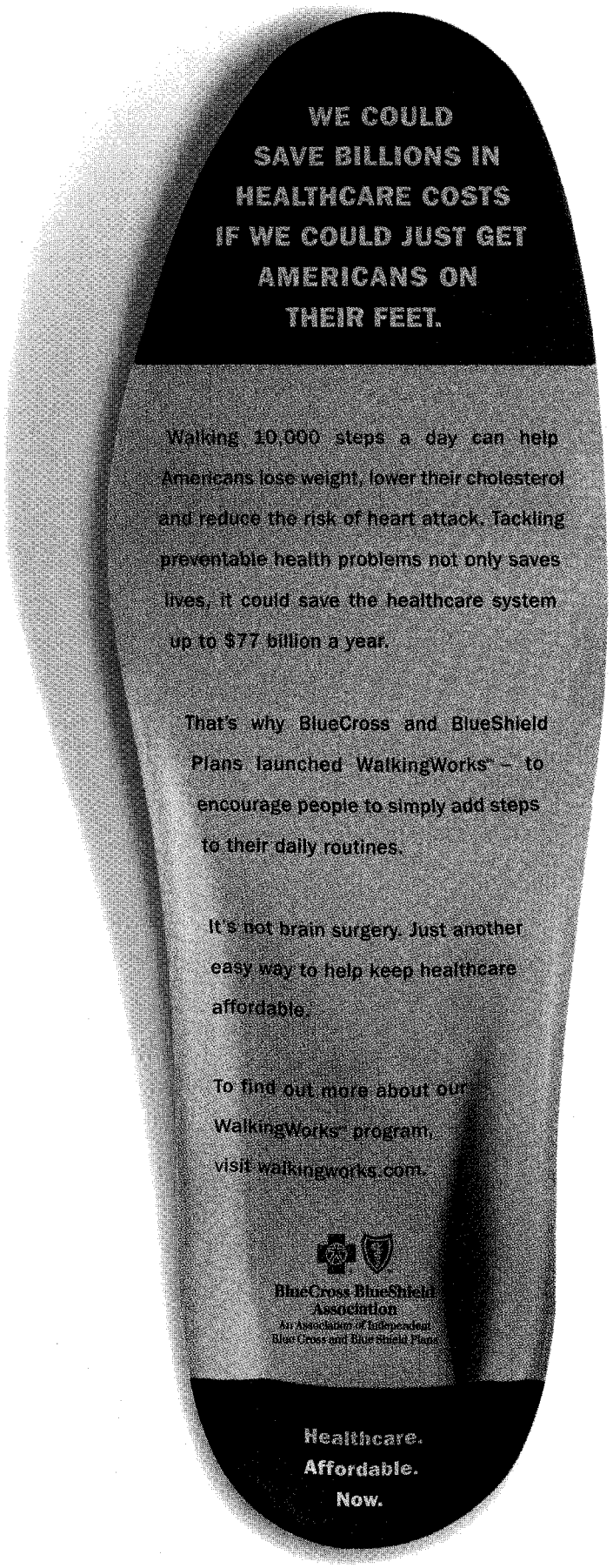
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the autocracies it supported for decades might, in the end, encourage democracy. Even the region's Islamist movements are debating the merits of representative government.

A major obstacle to the continuation of this process, however, is the fact that liberal reformers, upon whom many Americans place their hopes for democratization, are mostly intellectuals without organized constituencies. There is no equivalent of the broad-based Civic Forum that made the transition to democracy in the former Czechoslovakia such a success. In Egypt, for example, the *kifaya* (enough) movement, which has attracted a lot of attention by holding demonstrations in defiance of a government ban, appears incapable of mustering more than a few hundred people to each of its rallies. Throughout the region, it is the Islamists, not the democrats, who have the organized constituencies. That's why religious Shia parties won the largest share of the vote in Iraq, and that's why free elections would give significant power to religious parties in other countries as well. In Morocco, Jordan, and Algeria, for example, religious parties that have been allowed to register and compete in the elections have shown that they have a substantial following.

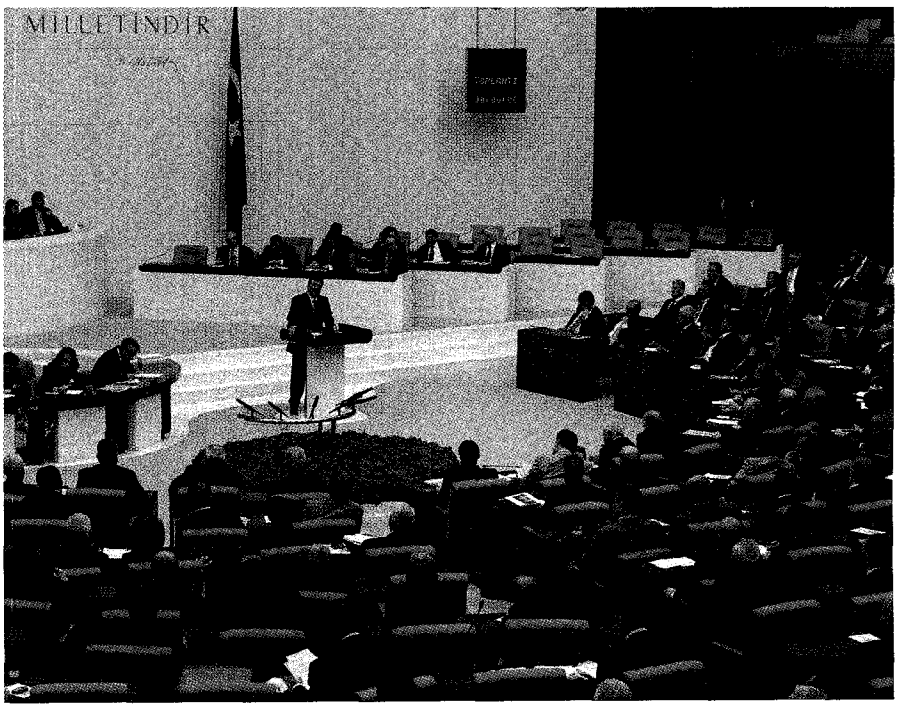
This means that, for the United States to further encourage democratization, it will have to cultivate the Islamists. Of course, liberal organizations also deserve support. But, unless Islamist movements become convinced that it is in their interests to advocate democracy in their countries and participate in a democratic process—even if the process does not produce an Islamist state—democratic transitions will be extremely difficult. Despite the mutual dislike and suspicion between Washington and Islamists, the United States must recognize the legitimacy of their participation and defend their rights as much as it does those of liberals.

ISLAMIST ORGANIZATIONS—that is, organizations that appeal to the religious values and social conservatism of the Arab public in their call for political reform—are the key to democratization in the Arab world. They have considerable support, as measured by the votes they receive when they are allowed to participate in elections, the turnout at their demonstrations, and the audiences attracted by radical preachers during sermons at mosques. They are also well-organized, maintaining strong networks of educational, health, and charitable programs.

Clearly, such participation and popularity suggests these organizations would be expected to play—and ought to play—a central role in Arab democracy. Indeed, there is little alternative: It would take considerable repression to prevent such groups from participating in a democratic political process, and that repression would in turn undermine the possibility of democracy itself. Furthermore, the post–cold war experience in Eastern Europe showed that a crucial element for the success of democratic transitions is the willingness of old, undemocratic parties to reinvent themselves as new organizations capable of becoming part of the new politics. The success of old communist parties in transforming themselves into new democratic actors was crucial in establishing political competition in Eastern Europe. New parties appear by the dozen in all democratic transitions around the globe, but they rarely survive. One need only look at Iraq to see that this dynamic also holds true in the Middle East today. The former exile movements and many religious parties are all represented in parliament, whereas most of the roughly 200 parties formed after Saddam's fall hardly received any votes, despite the considerable help they received from the U.S. government and democracy-promotion organizations.

The Bush administration's answer to the challenge of political Islam has been to promote moderate Islamist organizations and moderate interpretations of the religion. The Muslim World Outreach Policy Coordinating Committee—set up in July 2004 by the National Security Council to improve communication with Islamic organizations and better the image of the United States in the Muslim world—is an important part of this strategy. But trying to promote moderate interpretations of Islam is probably futile and certainly

Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul addresses the Turkish parliament, which is controlled by a moderate Islamist party.



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risky. Remember that, when the Iranians took over the embassy in Tehran, conventional wisdom was that the Shia were the most dangerous Muslims, whereas Wahhabis were thought to be conservative socially but rather apolitical. Obviously, that view has changed in recent years. Nevertheless, the idea has taken hold in some parts of the administration that Sufism represents a benign, moderate form of Islam that should be encouraged. It is doubtful that most people making the argument understand the roots of Sufism and why it has spread in some regions but not in others. It is even more doubtful that they have given much thought to the resentment that favoring one sect over another could cause in the Muslim world. (Imagine the reaction in this country if secular France, concerned about radical evangelical groups in the United States, decided to support moderate churches.)

The challenge that Islamist organizations pose to democracy cannot be met by befriending moderate but marginally important groups. It can only be met by dealing with the mainstream, powerful organizations that will determine the future of Middle East politics. A good place to start is with the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, the first and still the most influential modern Islamist movement. Much of the radical thinking about the moral corruption of Arab states and the need for dramatic change has come from the Muslim Brotherhood. Beginning in the 1920s, Muslim Brothers were the first to denounce what they saw as the moral decadence to which Arab societies had sunk as a result of abandoning the precepts of Islam, and they were the first to call for the building of Islamic states. Egyptian Muslim Brothers, often acting as teachers, have been at the root of radical Islam's growth in the Middle East. Even the militancy and missionary zeal manifested in recent decades by Wahhabis is attributed by scholars and analysts to the influence of the Muslim Brothers. But the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood long ago renounced violence and is seeking to become a legal political party. Denied the right to do so—Egypt bans parties based on religion—Muslim Brothers have still sought to peacefully participate in Egyptian politics since the early '80s, running for office on the tickets of other political parties or as independents. Other Islamist organizations, such as Muslim Brothers in other countries, are also debating whether to embrace the democratic process.

Still, any opening toward Islamist groups raises the vexing problem of their commitment to nonviolence and to democracy. There are no simple answers to these issues. Saying that the United States will deal only with organizations that have renounced violence and thus do not have an armed wing is tempting but unrealistic. If Washington had taken such a position in Iraq, there would have been no elections—after all, the Kurdish parties and the Shia religious parties that won the elections all have armed militias. The Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan control the *peshmerga*, which includes as many as 80,000 fighters. The two major parties in the Shia coalition, Dawa and the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, probably have an additional 10,000, if not more. If

Egyptian students commemorate the assassination of Hassan El Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Washington wants elections in Lebanon this month, as it says it does, it has to accept that Hezbollah will run without disarming. If it wants elections in Palestine in July, it has to accept that Hamas will still have an armed wing. It also has no choice but to accept that there can be no certainty about any party's long-term commitment to democracy. Uncertainty is an inherent part of any transition.

ISLAMIST PARTIES ALREADY participate in some Arab countries, and they are not proving less—or more—democratic than other organizations. But there is ample evidence that participation in an electoral process forces any party, regardless of ideology, to moderate its position if it wants to attract voters in large numbers and avoid a backlash. In Turkey, the Islamist party that now governs the country and aspires to lead it into the European Union started with radical propensities in the mid-'90s. It won enough votes to form the government, but it also frightened the secular army enough to seek a court's disbarment of the ruling party in 1997. That experience spurred the rise of the moderates within the Islamist movement, leading to their victory, as the reorganized Justice and Development Party, in 2002.

Talking to the Muslim Brotherhood and other mainstream Islamist organizations should be a central, ongoing task for American diplomats in the Middle East. We need to understand these organizations as well as we possibly can. It is only when we understand them better that we can decide whether they have a legitimate role to play in a democracy or whether their ultimate goals are dangerous. Moreover, such engagement would strengthen the hand of the more moderate, democratic Islamists who favor reform. It would do more to restore the tarnished image of the United States in the Arab world than any public diplomacy initiative launched so far. Of course, engagement won't guarantee the success of democracy in the Middle East, but not engaging will guarantee its failure. ■

JOHN MOORE/AP WIDEWORLD

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Rhetoric v. reality.

Democratease

BY MARISA KATZ

THIS SHOULD BE Les Campbell's moment. Campbell works at the nonprofit National Democratic Institute (NDI) as director of Middle East and North Africa democracy programs, and at no other point in his ten years there has his line of work received so much attention—in an inaugural address, in a State of the Union, among the talking points of the U.S. government's most senior officials. Moreover, at no other time in his career has Campbell witnessed such excitement in the Middle East. NDI's headquarters in Washington and its field offices abroad are being approached daily by would-be Arab democrats seeking political training. Meanwhile, the elections in Iraq and the Palestinian territories, the protests in Lebanon, and the signals of reform coming from Egypt and Saudi Arabia are making front-page news.

And yet Campbell is frustrated. "The administration is using very strong rhetoric," he says. "I appreciate and applaud that—the consistent message of democracy and freedom. It gives people strength. Arab activists who might otherwise have been quiet feel if they are thrown in jail, they will be bailed out; if they have an idea, there will be funding." The problem, he explains, is that the administration is not meeting the expectations it has created. "Support for taking risks is lagging behind the rhetoric," he says. "It's not clear that the U.S. Embassy is going to be a backup. And, while we can provide training, we can't provide financial support."

Campbell is not alone in his frustration. Many longtime players in the democratization industry report a dangerous mismatch between the ambitious—and, at times, self-congratulatory—language coming from the White House and the financial and diplomatic investment the Bush administration is making to back up its promises. Beyond Iraq, the professional democracy promoters say, not much has changed. Money pledged has not come through. Claims about the U.S. commitment to supporting democracy movements worldwide are not reflected in budget numbers or in meetings with authoritarian leaders. Meanwhile, activists say, all the public grandstanding in Washington is actually making democracy promotion harder.

IT IS DIFFICULT to calculate the precise U.S. financial investment in democracy promotion, because the money is spread across different programs and agencies. By its own account, this administration has increased overall spending on democracy programs. But democratization advocates note that the bulk of new money is going to the Middle East. For instance, if you subtract the Middle East from the budget of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), one of the main supporters of democracy programs conducted by NDI, the International Republican Institute (IRI), and similar organizations, funding has remained flat for the past two years. Likewise, although officially the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is spending about twice as much as it did two years ago on democracy and governance programs, when you exclude Iraq and Afghanistan from the calculation, the numbers are practically unchanged. NDI and IRI both devote half of their entire budgets to Iraq.

Meanwhile, despite President Bush's inaugural pledge of support for "the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture," democracy funding for some regions has actually declined. During his presidency, Bush has decreased spending on democracy promotion in Eastern Europe by 38 percent and in the former Soviet states by 46 percent. Eurasia Foundation President Bill Maynes says declining U.S. government support has necessitated across-the-board cuts to all his programs. It has also meant having to seek funding from foreign governments and businesses, which often prioritize economic development over more direct forms of democracy promotion.

Even when it comes to the administration's signature democracy initiatives, the record falls well short of the rhetoric. When, in 2002, Bush announced the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA)—which restructures foreign aid to reward countries that "govern justly, invest in their people, and encourage economic freedom"—he pledged to increase funding annually until it reached $5 billion by 2006. Yet, each year, he has asked Congress for less than he said he would, and Congress has authorized less than that. Bush's actual 2006 budget proposal requests only $3 billion, and that figure may be overly optimistic. The Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)—designed to fuel political, economic, and educational reform, as well as women's empowerment in that region—has received similarly unenthusiastic support. After requesting $150 million and getting only $74 million for 2005, the president is lowering his sights and asking for $120 million in the next budget cycle. For the U.N. Democracy Fund, which Bush unveiled with few specifics at the opening session of the United Nations last fall, the president has proposed a first-time contribution of $10 million. But, at the same time, administration-encouraged criticism of the United Nations prompted the Senate last month to reduce U.S. contributions to U.N. peacekeeping missions by tens of millions of dollars. Finally, Congress wasn't particularly receptive to Bush's 2004 State of the Union proposal to double funding for the NED to $80 million. It granted $60 million for 2005; Bush is trying again for the $80 million in 2006.

The reluctance to invest in these highly publicized initiatives is coming from both Capitol Hill and the White House. Congress's lack of enthusiasm reflects, in part, dissatisfac-

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tion with the specifics of what it has been asked to fund. The House responded to Bush's fiscal year 2004 request for MEPI money with concerns that the program was ill-defined and might duplicate existing aid efforts. The MCA has provided even less to work with. Although the program remained high among the talking points of senior administration officials, eleven months lapsed between the president's proposal and his submission of draft legislation to Congress. Today, more than three years after the initial MCA proposal, only two grants have been announced, and none of the qualifying countries has received a dime.

More generally, however, the administration has done little to overcome lingering skepticism about democracy aid. "There's always been hostility, in certain quarters of Congress, toward foreign aid of any kind," says California Representative Adam Schiff, who recently led colleagues in beseeching the House for more democracy promotion money. "With democracy aid," Schiff says, "there's simply a lack of buy-in among some of the members of Congress about whether the United States really gets a benefit." Freedom House Executive Director Jennifer Windsor, who previously headed democracy programs at USAID, says she understands the dilemma. "It's hard to trace causal linkages," she says. "If you cut $10 in child survival funds, the lobbyists and activists can tell you how many children will die. With democracy, it's not that clear." Nonetheless, Schiff suggests that the administration could have gotten more money for its initiatives—if it had bothered to fight for them. "I don't think the White House has put a lot of muscle into this yet," he says. "They have a finite set of high priorities that they work on, and this doesn't seem to be in that category."

Democracy advocates further contend that, although the Bush administration has funneled more democracy program money toward the Middle East, the way that money is being spent limits its potential impact. Tamara Cofman Wittes and Sarah E. Yerkes of the Brookings Institution wrote a scathing report in November calling MEPI "a scatter-shot approach to promoting reform" that reveals "the deep ambivalence with which the president's forward strategy of freedom is being implemented." Their analysis of the first two years of MEPI spending concluded that the program favored uncontroversial projects, such as female literacy and technical assistance for government officials, over ones that might actually affect the political status quo. They identified a bias for small, quick-impact projects (such as one-off training seminars) that could demonstrate short-term accomplishments over more comprehensive, less visual efforts (such as wholesale judicial reform) that would bring longer-term rewards. And they noted that MEPI sometimes proceeded without consideration of political reality, as in the case of a Gulf Regional Campaign School for women political candidates, held at a time when only three Gulf states allowed women to run for office.

These same biases extend beyond MEPI. Campbell describes how, after NDI conducted a political training seminar in Jordan, the State Department called, wanting to use some of the participants in media roundtables. "There's a preference for public events that can generate publicity, with press, keynotes, banners," Campbell says. "There's a danger that democratization becomes event-driven rather than designed to have impact behind the scenes." There's also a danger, as Wittes and Yerkes write, that Arab activists will become "suspicious that the entire project is a token gesture, a campaign-season gimmick, or, worst of all, a new means of propping up the same regimes who have benefited from direct U.S. assistance in years past."

SUSPICIONS ABOUT THE sincerity of Bush's vision of spreading democracy in the Middle East and throughout the world are compounded by the administration's timid approach when it comes to diplomacy. An ambitious plan to engage Arab governments in discussions about political reform, the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative, was dramatically diluted after the leak of a working paper in the newspaper *Al Hayat* provoked outrage among Arab leaders. The version announced at the G-8 summit last June included only the vaguest statements about the need to deepen democracy and broaden public participation. Still, only five Arab countries (Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Tunisia, and Yemen) agreed to attend a Broader Middle East luncheon.

The president and his top advisers have begun to raise questions about political reform in private meetings with authoritarian leaders, but inconsistently. IRI President Lorne Craner, who, until last August, was the State Department's assistant secretary for democracy, human rights and labor, says that, after September 11, democracy and human rights "zoomed up to the first or second talking point with almost any foreign leader." Craner recalls: "By the time I walked in [to meet with foreign leaders], it was down to, 'How are you going to do this?' rather than, 'You really need to do this,' because they had already gotten that lecture from the president and the secretary of state." Yet, as recently as last spring, Bush failed to mention democracy when he met with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, focusing instead on Israel's proposed withdrawal from Gaza. Likewise, Bush's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin this month dealt mostly with Gaza and with nuclear proliferation. Public rebukes, such as the U.S. protests over Egypt's arrest of human rights activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim and opposition leader Ayman Nour, are still rare. The administration has found that it was easier to point the finger at Saddam Hussein, with whom we were already not talking, than it is to exert diplomatic pressure on our allies. The verdict is still out on whether this White House would tolerate a democracy movement that runs counter to U.S. interests. "The reality is that the U.S. still has very close relationships with autocratic regimes in the Middle East," says Thomas Carothers, director of the Democracy and Rule of Law Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. "So far, it's hard to say that the increased rhetoric is

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going to lead to a very changed policy. The big test is coming: How hard will they push friends in Morocco, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar? Are we willing to do more than applaud gradual change?"

To close the gap between the rhetoric and policy on democratization, the administration and Congress will need to substantially increase their investment in aid initiatives and diplomacy. At the same time, they may also want to tone down the talk. It is one thing to press foreign leaders in private. It is quite another to make grandiose claims on an international stage. "The current atmosphere of credit-taking and foreign policy triumphalism doesn't fit well with the need for subtlety," Carothers says. He stresses that Bush is an extremely unpopular figure abroad and especially in the Middle East. As long as it appears that the push for democracy is Bush's personal mission, there is a risk that the effort will provoke a backlash against the United States.

Indeed, democratization industry players are already witnessing some of the negative ramifications of Bush's rhetoric. They say their jobs would be easier if the administration were a bit quieter. "There's been a dramatic increase in questioning of our work," Campbell says, pointing to a *Bahrain Tribune* headline: "PROBE LAUNCHED INTO NDI ACTIVITIES." "We're doing the same work we always were," he continues. "All of a sudden, it becomes fodder for news. It was almost better when nobody cared what we were doing. Then people weren't so ready to suspect that we were part of some larger agenda." Windsor says that Freedom House, too, is under increased pressure. The Russian foreign minister identified the organization, in particular, as a meddler in Ukraine. Kazakhstan scrutinized Freedom House's local operation for tax evasion. The Kyrgyzstan government shut down its printing press days before the country's election. "It's very hard to be on the radar screen," Windsor says. "We're a human rights organization. We don't have bodyguards for our people out there."

WHAT WOULD A better approach to spreading democracy in the world look like? More money and more serious diplomacy. Fewer photo-ops and unfulfilled promises. This White House is expecting a lot from its democracy drive. It wants to justify the war in Iraq. It wants to win hearts and minds, particularly in the Arab world. It wants to reduce threats to U.S. national security. And it wants, as Bush said in his State of the Union address, to "build and preserve a community of free and independent nations with governments that answer to their citizens." That's a tall order. But the time has never been better. And the Bush administration should be careful not to squander its opportunity. After all, Les Campbell is not the only who has been waiting for this moment for a long time. If we don't do this right, we may be waiting for a long time still. ■

IT CAN EXACERBATE TENSIONS BETWEEN LEFT AND RIGHT, SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS, THE ARMY AND THE SETTLERS, JEWISH AND ARAB CITIZENS.

OR IT CAN LEAD TO PEACE.

Israel's removal of all settlements in Gaza and four in the West Bank will be a watershed event for the nation. The political and psychological implications of this Disengagement will be profound.

Despite Knesset approval and support from most Israelis, extremist elements have already threatened violence and rebellion to prevent the Disengagement from occurring. During the next few months, the eyes of the world will once again be fixed upon the Middle East, watching how Israel fares through this delicate process.

The New Israel Fund is determined to ensure that through this difficult period, Israel's democracy continues to flourish for all its citizens. Those on the political left and the right. Jews as well as Arabs. Secular and religious. Rich and poor. We believe in respect for the rule of the law, in tolerance and dialogue, and, above all, in the principle that democratic change can not be effected through violence.

This is why the New Israel Fund is now allocating new grants to organizations that encourage civil dialogue and minimize the prospect for an escalation in violence and incitement within Israel. We are also leading a public campaign that counteracts the demagoguery and religious rhetoric of the extremists, calling upon the democratic values of Israel's founders and the tradition of social justice in Judaism.

While many Israeli citizens are working hard to resist those who would seek to undermine Israel's democracy, too many American Jews are not engaged. Israel needs our help. We must actively oppose efforts to polarize the country, preclude civil discourse and prevent progress on the path to peace. We must demonstrate that Israel can be both a Jewish and a democratic state.

Add your voice to NIF's Campaign for Israel's Future. Sign an open letter of support demonstrating that the American Jewish community stands firmly with Israel, for the rule of law, for democracy and for the future of peace. And help us help Israelis who share our values.

Please go to the New Israel Fund website at www.nif.org today or call toll-free **1-888-988-3863**. There is no time. We must act now.

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The effects of American power.

Pressure Points

BY LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

WITH DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS either recently held or soon to take place in Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Ukraine, and Georgia, a fight over foreign policy bragging rights has broken out, the likes of which has not been seen since the debate over whether Ronald Reagan or Mikhail Gorbachev deserved more credit for demolishing the Soviet Union. As in that earlier contest, when it comes to the sources of today's democratic resurgence, history's first draft has already degenerated into competing black-and-white cartoons.

To hear President Bush's critics tell it, the latest democratic wave amounts to a big coincidence, owing nothing to a president who speaks of democracy and little else and even less to the example of Iraq. Writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, *The Nation*'s Adam Shatz claims, "[T]o the extent that the Middle East has moved toward democracy, it's as much in spite of American pressure as because of it," while, reaching back over a hundred years for the proximate cause of the Arab world's democratization, Columbia University's Rashid Khalidi tells National Public Radio, "I don't think the Bush doctrine is animating the spirit of democracy. It goes back to the late nineteenth century, when the first constitutions were established [in the Middle East]." On the other side of the divide, Bush likens the fall of Saddam Hussein to the fall of the Berlin Wall, casting it as a "watershed event in the global democratic revolution" and even touting Iraq as a sufficient explanation for the "Arab spring" as well as democratic uprisings further afield.

Both arguments reflect what Georgetown University's Robert Lieber calls a *reductio ad Iraqum*, in which every accomplishment or setback of U.S. foreign policy traces back to Iraq. Neither version of events fares well under scrutiny. When democracy blossoms in several different places at once in a region whose political culture hasn't budged in 60 years, it's illogical to credit internal forces alone. At the same time, crediting the inspirational effect of Iraq's elections with events in places as far-flung as Ukraine and Egypt goes too far—and, in slighting the U.S. role as an agent of democracy in every one of them, not far enough.

Each camp approaches the events of this spring from a different direction, but both end up in the same place: repeating the claim that "people power," triggered either by unique circumstances or the example of Iraq, accounts for the democratic wave sweeping over the Middle East and Central Asia, and that it alone can accomplish the ends of U.S. foreign policy in the region. What neither mentions is that, absent direct U.S. intervention, not one of these movements would have succeeded. This holds true in Egypt, Ukraine, Georgia, the Palestinian Authority, Lebanon, Kyrgyzstan, and wherever else democracy has gained a foothold since the invasion of Iraq. Has that invasion changed the world directly? Maybe. Maybe not. What we do know is that it changed the orientation of U.S. foreign policy. And that *is* changing the world.

A CLOSER LOOK AT the recent revolutions reveals why this is so. In Lebanon, popular outrage at the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri on February 14 put thousands of demonstrators in the streets, launching the Cedar Revolution. But it was the United States—joined this time by France—that translated outrage into concrete results. Having partnered with France last year to co-sponsor a U.N. Security Council resolution calling on Syrian troops to quit Lebanon, the administration was devising strategies to accomplish this aim even on the eve of Hariri's death. In the aftermath of the assassination, Washington promptly recalled its ambassador to Damascus, threatened new sanctions, and pressed the United Nations and even the French—who insisted that Syria-backed Hezbollah forces be permitted to stay in Lebanon—for stronger action. What resulted was, in the words of U.N. envoy Terje Roed-Larson, a "unique, remarkable, and broad consensus" at the Security Council that the Syrians must withdraw before Lebanon's upcoming elections—a U.S-led consensus that Syrian officials themselves credit for their retreat. As do the Lebanese. "Without U.S. pressure, and particularly George Bush's personal interest," says Lebanese American University Professor Habib Malik, "the Syrians would have just played games."

The U.S. involvement in last December's Orange Revolution in Ukraine followed exactly the model of its involvement in 2003's Rose Revolution in Georgia, where Washington subsidized a democratic movement from within and pressured an undemocratic regime from without. Over the past two years, the United States has poured roughly $65 million in democracy aid into Ukraine—funding, among other things, the exit poll showing that pro-Kremlin candidate Prime Minister Victor Yanukovich had lost the presidential election he claimed to have won last year, as well as training sessions for the judges who dismissed the outcome. This was enough for Russian President Vladimir Putin to allege U.S. interference, but, in truth, the more direct involvement came later. Immediately after last November's rigged election, the Bush team and its East European allies mounted an international campaign to demonstrate that, as then–Secretary of State Colin Powell put it, "There will be consequences for our relationship, for Ukraine's hopes for Euro-Atlantic integration, and for individuals responsible for perpetrating fraud." Powell conveyed this message in person to his Russian counterparts, who ultimately capitulated to demands for a second election. "Had we not enlarged NATO to the Ukrainian border, had we never had

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American NGOs in Ukraine, had we not intervened at the crucial moment after the election," says longtime democracy advocate Ronald Asmus, a former deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs, "combustion would never have taken place."

In contrast to Lebanon and Ukraine, in Egypt, where President Hosni Mubarak recently announced multiparty elections after 25 years in power, there was limited domestic pressure for democratic reform, mostly in the form of protests by Egyptian liberals. The announcement, however, came only days after Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice canceled a visit to Cairo in protest of Mubarak critic Ayman Nour's imprisonment. It also came amid an administration review of Egypt policy, threats from Congress to reduce assistance, the U.S. role in the cancelation of a G-8 summit to be held in Egypt last month, and U.S. conditions that have prevented Mubarak from spending over $1 billion in aid from Washington. This, in turn, coincided with the Bush team's decision to break with previous U.S. policy (as well as previous interpretations of Egyptian law) and provide funds directly to Egypt's human rights and democracy organizations. "Nothing would have happened without U.S. pressure," says Negad El Borai, director of the Cairo-based Group of Democratic Development. "Now everybody in Egypt is talking about democracy."

The least publicized example of U.S. involvement is Kyrgyzstan's Tulip Revolution. There, in a country most Americans have never heard of—but home to a vital U.S. airbase—Washington flexed its muscle from the back of a truck. As part of his campaign against political dissent on the eve of parliamentary elections in February, President Askar Akayev cut off power to a U.S.-funded printing press—on which opposition newspapers calling for his ouster depended. Overnight, the U.S. Embassy trucked over generators to restart the presses, which, via articles detailing electoral fraud and growing popular unrest, would soon engineer Akayev's downfall. The highest per capita recipient of U.S. aid in Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan was already home to an assortment of U.S.-funded TV and radio programs and, most important, a U.S. Embassy unusually committed to promoting democracy—so much so that Akayev's government forged documents purporting to show it plotting his demise. As opposition leader Edil Baisilov told the Associated Press after Akayev fled the country in March, "It would have been absolutely impossible for this to have happened without [U.S.] help." There is a lesson here, and a reminder, for a nation chastened by the war in Iraq: When it comes to democratization, either the decisive push will come from Washington or it may not come at all.

DEMOCRACY, OF COURSE, is a political choice, an act of will. Someone, not something, must create it. Often that someone is a single leader—a Juan Carlos or a Vaclav Havel. Other times, pressure for democracy comes from a political opposition—Solidarity in Poland or demonstrators in the streets of Kiev and Beirut. Without these forces, external pressure can only accomplish so much—a fact evident in Syria, which lacks a cohesive democratic opposition. But, it is also true that, absent U.S. pressure, people power rarely suffices—a fact vividly on display today in Uzbekistan. While the United States seldom convinces a government to topple itself, in many situations—particularly moments of crisis—U.S. intervention can tip the scales in favor of democracy. During the 1980s, Washington successfully applied diplomatic and economic pressure to repressive regimes from Poland to South Korea and Taiwan. Today, U.S. "crisis diplomacy" is playing the same role in Georgia, Ukraine, Lebanon, and Egypt.

That one can barely tell these days where people power ends and U.S. power begins also says something essential about the legitimacy of U.S. power, so widely assumed to have been tainted by the Iraq war. "The overwhelming majority in Lebanon realize that what's happening is the result of U.S. benevolence," says Malik. "Bush is even being called 'St. George.' " Citizens in other newly democratic countries may tell pollsters they resent the United States, but, if the overwhelming preference for democracy reflected in the same polls tells us anything, they clearly want to buy what we're selling. When Washington helps oust a leader in Kyrgyzstan who hosts a major U.S. airbase, helps topple a leader in Ukraine who has dispatched his troops to Iraq, or otherwise puts its power at the service of others, it sends a signal that U.S. interests and the world's interests aren't inherently incompatible after all. "It will take time," says Egyptian political scientist Amr Hamzawy, "but, if America continues to promote democracy and work in the interests of the Arab publics, people will become more and more supportive of its foreign policy."

Even more so, because, while the tactic for democracy promotion varied by circumstance in all of these cases, in none of them did it involve Washington exporting democracy by force of arms—a means that critics of the Bush administration, both at home and abroad, routinely conflate with an end. Alas, in the telling of American opinion-makers who take an organic view of democratization—arguing that it must be grown, nurtured, and never transplanted—interference is still interference. From Assistant Secretary of State Adolph A. Berle, who, in 1939, declared that "a nation coerced into democracy is not a democracy," straight through to Senator Chuck Hagel, who warns against the inclination "to go forth and impose democracy," the argument is nothing new. But it has been enjoying a vogue in Washington as the Iraq war grinds into its third year. Abroad, however, the voices in full cry today against "outside interference" belong mostly to the dictators and their allies. As for the democrats, in an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Kyrgyzstan's Tariel Bektemirov neatly summarized their priorities. Echoing Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's famous plea from the Soviet Union to "interfere as much as you can. We beg you to come and interfere," Bektemirov said, "I want the U.S. to interfere. I want the world at large to interfere." And so we should. ■

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What Democrats need to say about education.

Class Struggle

BY ROBERT GORDON

IN THE ONLY exchange on education during the 2004 presidential debates, John Kerry made one argument: "The president who talks about No Child Left Behind refused to fully fund [it] by 28 billion dollars ... he didn't put in what he promised, and that makes a difference in the lives of our children." George W. Bush responded acidly: "Only a liberal senator from Massachusetts would say that a 49 percent increase in funding for education was not enough. We've increased funds. But, more importantly, we've reformed the system."

That sums up the education debate in last year's campaign. Bush championed reform and resources. Although Bob Dole had once wanted to shut down the Department of Education, in his first term, Bush supported standards-based accountability through the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). And, though he fell short of his promises on money, Bush did approve more than $30 billion in new K–12 education funding.

While Bush and the Republicans moved to the middle, Kerry and the Democrats retreated from it. When Bush signed the NCLB in 2002, liberal lions like Ted Kennedy stood by his side. But, in 2004, Democrats regularly attacked the law as "punitive." Howard Dean pilloried his opponents for supporting reform. John Edwards, though offering a detailed reform plan, said he regretted voting for NCLB because of how Bush administered it. Kerry, a longtime reformer, said the law "terrified" teachers. The party's top three education demands were money, money, and money. "You cannot promise to leave no child behind and then leave the money behind," Kerry often said.

While Democrats reinforced the old idea that they just want to spend, Bush appealed to a public that wants both accountability and funding. In 1996, two out of three registered voters thought Bill Clinton was the best candidate on education. By the end of the 2004 campaign, Bush enjoyed a small lead over Kerry on the issue.

These are vivid memories for me. I was one of Kerry's education advisers during the general election. I previously worked for—and have since advised—Edwards. The views expressed here are my own, but I bear plenty of responsibility for the developments described. Yet the attitudes of the candidates reflected the attitudes of the party. Top congressional Democrats today say nothing different.

It's stunning to see Democrats lose their edge on education. That's because, on education, Democrats don't need to explain why the United States needs vigorous government; Americans already want effective public schools. Through education, Democrats reach for their own deepest aspiration: a country where birth doesn't dictate destiny. Nothing offends Democratic ideals more than the fact that a typical poor or African American twelfth-grader reads at the same level as a typical middle-class or white eighth-grader. Nothing is a greater threat to middle-class prosperity than mediocre schools. If Democrats cannot speak powerfully to an issue that speaks so powerfully to them, they cannot expect to prevail on tougher ideological terrain.

To get the politics right, progressives need to act on a policy principle that Americans understand: Money ain't everything. The United States has tripled education funding per student since the 1960s, and we now outspend all but a few countries. But our students' reading and math scores have edged up only modestly, and our achievement remains in the middle of the developed world. Yes, money matters; the shortfall in NCLB funding has hurt the law's own cause. Democrats deserve credit for supporting more spending on schools. But they squander that credit when they make money their only focus.

In emphasizing resources, Democrats evade questions of culture and institutions. Those matter, too. It matters whether we set high expectations for schools and teachers or accept mediocrity, and whether we impose consequences for failure or excuse it. That Republicans are fond of making these points—and unions and school officials are not fond of hearing them—does not make them less true.

Progressives are misled by the logic of their own Bush-hatred: Bush is for NCLB, so NCLB must be bad. Never mind that President Clinton embraced accountability before President Bush, Governor Ann Richards before Governor Bush. As the demands of NCLB mount, and as resistance to those demands spreads into conservative strongholds like Texas and Utah, many progressives are joining the fun. But opportunistic attacks are not an affirmative agenda.

At a time when Americans seek strength in their leaders, Democrats should find the strength to speak hard truths about our schools and support essential changes. At a time when Americans are unsure what Democrats stand for, Democrats should give some resounding answers: The achievement gap is a national disgrace, and equal opportunity is a national command. Democrats will require greater support for schools, and greater demands on them, than ever before. They will use federal power to pursue equal

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justice—even at the expense of states' rights, even in the face of their own constituencies. Democrats will put children first.

THE FIRST TASK is to stop the unprincipled attacks on NCLB. At its heart, this is the sort of law liberals once dreamed about. In the 1970s, liberal litigators fell one vote short of a Supreme Court decision requiring evenhanded education funding. NCLB doesn't guarantee funding, but it goes one step further by demanding educational *results*. It says that, when states accept federal funding, they must ensure that all children (except the most disabled) meet "challenging academic standards." This has made achievement a legal command, not just a gauzy aspiration. The law requires a form of affirmative action: States must show that minority and poor students are achieving proficiency like everyone else, or else provide remedies targeted to the schools those students attend. The law's unyielding demands have created a powerful tool to raise both expectations and money.

Tough accountability serves kids, particularly the poorest. Studies of high-poverty, high-achieving schools (by Kentucky's Prichard Committee, the University of Texas, Ohio's Board of Education, and others) consistently show that high expectations are critical to good results. The Hoover Institution's Eric Hanushek has shown that states that had adopted accountability laws with consequences for failure before NCLB existed have seen greater increases in achievement than states that didn't. NCLB's requirement to disaggregate data based on race and income has cast a harsh but necessary light on the achievement gap. It is too early to judge the law's impact, but recent surveys by two respected think tanks, the Center on Education Policy and the Education Trust, suggest scores are rising and gaps are slowly narrowing.

In President Bush's first term, Education Department officials fueled anger at NCLB through indifference and incompetence. They found the money to pay off Armstrong Williams, but not to pay for high-quality tests that accurately measure achievement. They drew a rebuke from the Government Accountability Office for failing to give states key guidance. They conflated reasonable concerns about inflexible regulations with unreasonable efforts to evade the law's core demands. The new education secretary, Margaret Spellings, has struck a better balance, but she is digging out of a hole. Bush continues to prioritize plutocratic tax cuts over an education bill that costs a fraction as much.

The law itself is too stringent in some ways and too lax in others. Schools may be labeled as "needing improvement" because of statistical anomalies. So many schools are subject to mandated remedies that state bureaucracies are being overwhelmed. Because NCLB requires 100 percent of students to demonstrate "proficiency" by 2014, but allows states to define proficiency as they please, states can create the illusion of progress by lowering their standards. Some states, like Texas, have done just that.

INSTEAD OF WORKING to address these failures, too many progressives have focused on pleasing angry activists. The Democratic primaries brought tremendous pressure on candidates—partly because of unions' influence and partly because of a primary schedule frontloaded with states lacking any appetite for reform. When *Education Week* ranked all state accountability systems, New Hampshire and Iowa took the last two spots. Appealing to rural and suburban audiences contented with their schools, Howard Dean won cheers as he derided the "No School Board Left Standing" Act.

Resistance to federal power is now a progressive rallying cry in education. Democrats at the National Conference of State Legislatures recently helped draft a bipartisan report charging that NCLB infringes upon states' Tenth Amendment rights. Most Utah Democrats supported a new state law jeopardizing $76 million in aid to poor students on the grounds that the state's own assessment system should have priority over NCLB. But that state system does not even exist today; the real question, as the law's lead sponsor asked, was, "At what price is our sovereignty for sale?" The National Education Association (NEA) is now suing Washington for forcing states to spend more money on education. Connecticut's Democratic attorney general, Richard Blumenthal, has praised the suit and threatened to bring one of his own.

When Democrats become champions of states' rights in schools, it is no wonder voters think the party has no principles. The federal government has served progressive educational ends for decades: demanding desegregation for African American children, offering Head Start for poor preschoolers, providing Title I funding to disadvantaged school-aged students, and requiring individualized treatment for children with disabilities. Only the federal government can ensure a fair chance for all American children. Before NCLB, most states didn't even track the performance of poor students. Thanks to NCLB, many schools are now offering those students help they desperately need. If the NEA's suit prevails in court, it won't even yield more money; it will just yield precedents limiting federal power and enable states to ignore the law's demands. That would be sad: One of the NEA's plaintiffs told *The New York Times* that NCLB had forced her district to offer longer school days and Saturday classes for low-achieving students. Progressives should celebrate that fact, not complain about it.

Democrats labeling NCLB as "punitive" see the law through the wrong end of the telescope. Schools that fall short under NCLB may indeed be required to offer tutoring after school, or to help students transfer to other public schools, or to reopen as charter schools. These steps may look punitive to many adults inside the schools. For children who aren't learning, however, these measures offer hope for a better education.

Other proposals from the left would dash inner-city hopes to placate suburban anxieties. Many parents at better schools now worry that rote "teaching to the test" has

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crowded out better teaching. Much of that problem could be addressed by spending more on complex assessments worth teaching to. That would preserve the accountability so critical in the worst schools, which, at least now, are teaching to something. Yet many progressives, including state legislators and Connecticut Senator Chris Dodd, would allow student performance to be counterbalanced by academic indicators of states' choosing. In some iterations, these measures could include parental satisfaction or student attendance. This regime would replace the clear demand for student achievement with a malleable nonstandard. It would be fine for most students in Greenwich, but a step backward for Bridgeport and New Haven.

Progressives seeking to gut NCLB should explain when, if their effort succeeds, the federal government will again commit to ensuring that every poor African American child can read. Progressives should be working to fix NCLB in a way that honors their values. It is right to seek the $12 billion needed for full funding of NCLB but wrong to disable the law until that staggering sum arrives. It is right to distinguish truly lousy schools from those on the margin but wrong to leave the distinction to state bureaucracies.

Rather than siding with foot-dragging states, progressives should support more vigorous use of federal power in the service of equal citizenship for all. National standards and national tests in reading and math would advance that ideal. There is no reason that 50 states should have 50 different definitions of proficiency; the reading and math skills required to flourish economically and participate politically across the United States are increasingly the same. In states across the South and West that now spend little on schools and mask weak results by applying low standards, national norms would become a lever to increase both achievement and funding. Generous funding could ensure a high-quality test that adequately measures complex knowledge and skills. (An existing test, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, does a good job but is not widely used.) With a huge data set, educators could better measure achievement. Parents would get a better picture of their children's progress compared with others.

National standards and a national test aren't radical ideas. Clinton proposed them on a voluntary basis; a few conservatives like the Fordham Foundation's Chester Finn have supported them. The right has kept standards entirely at the state level with talk of a "national school board," but Americans are loyal to their children's schools, not state bureaucracies. Polls have shown that two-thirds of Americans would support a national test. Progressives should welcome a debate over whether American citizenship should mean the same thing everywhere or if states should protect their prerogatives. Let Bush defend states' rights for a change.

THE TOUGHER CHALLENGE for progressives is not to fix NCLB, but to stop talking about it all the time—and instead offer an educational vision of their own. Bush isn't vulnerable for supporting standards; he is vulnerable for believing standards are enough. Tests measure progress but don't teach children.

Progressives should tackle a challenge all but ignored by Bush: strengthening the quality of teachers. As the Education Trust notes, good teachers are the single most important factor in good schools—affecting student achievement more than race, poverty, or parental education. Three years of good teachers can lift students' scores by 50 percentile points compared with three years of lousy teachers, according to researcher William Sanders. But, as talented women have moved on to other professions, teacher quality has declined. Education majors score below national averages on standardized tests. Most schools do little to draw or keep more talented teachers: Onerous hiring procedures discourage able candidates, while the lockstep pay scale rewards seniority and accumulated degrees, not success. Schools offer $80,000 salaries to middle-aged and mediocre gym teachers while losing bright young chemistry teachers who make only $40,000. Today, a middling performer can get a routine grant of tenure after three years, then become virtually impossible to remove for three decades. One North Carolina study showed that school superintendents would have liked to remove about one in 25 tenured teachers per year, but actually removed fewer than one in 600. Teacher quality is lowest in the poorest schools, where good teachers are needed most. Students at high-poverty schools are nearly twice as likely to be taught by teachers who lack even a minor in the relevant subject.

Strengthening teaching requires changes to the pay system and school culture that abet mediocrity. Standing alone, the usual liberal solution—across-the-board pay hikes—perpetuates the maldistribution of good teachers and reinforces the irrelevance of achievement. High-poverty schools need to attract more teachers with bonuses, and all schools need to attract better teachers with the promise of higher earnings for better results. Teachers reasonably worry about arbitrary merit bonuses, but performance pay need not be arbitrary. Sanders and others are developing methods to measure each teacher's contribution, accounting for students' starting points and their expected progress. Together with peer and principal reviews, these methods promise at least as rich a basis for evaluation as those available in other professions where performance pay is the norm.

While schools need better pay to attract good teachers, they also need better systems to remove bad ones. Today dismissal can take years, cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, and require proof of outrageous conduct. That is unfair to students and good teachers who want peers who work as hard as they do. Faculty deserve protection against dismissals based on politics or personal animus, but schools should extend the periods needed to get tenure and streamline procedures so dismissals are fair but fast. Finally, talented young people seeking to enter teaching should not be required to get education degrees with no proven link to classroom performance.

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Although still in their infancy, reforms along these lines have shown promise. When Chattanooga's lowest-performing schools offered teachers $5,000 bonuses, free graduate-school tuition, and mortgage assistance, vacancies dropped by 90 percent. The Milken Family Foundation's Teacher Advancement Program offers bonuses up to $5,000 based on a combination of evaluations and test scores. Most schools in the program are outperforming similar schools outside it. According to a recent evaluation, Teach for America's talented novices, lacking traditional training, outperform typical teachers in math instruction and equal them in reading.

A sound national plan would put big money on the table for school districts that adopt real reforms in pay, tenure, and licensing for teachers. To see what works best, schools should be encouraged to try different—and ambitious—approaches. With federal help, a city might offer a promising new math teacher in a poor school district $60,000 instead of $40,000; after excelling in the classroom for two years, that teacher might earn $80,000. Raises averaging $20,000 for one-third of the teachers at 10 percent of schools would cost $2 billion annually in a system spending over $400 billion, but could show the way to transform teaching.

Progressive leaders should couple these reforms with a sustained call for Americans to teach in troubled schools. Twelve percent of Yale seniors applied to Teach for America this year. How many more talented Americans, young and old, would teach if their country called?

MOST OF THESE ideas have long been championed by the Progressive Policy Institute and, more recently, by the bipartisan Teaching Commission. But, while such proposals thrive in think-tank hothouses, they wither in the heat of Democratic politics. Al Gore and John Kerry both offered agendas along these lines for teacher quality. But, after giving speeches and garnering media accolades, both candidates barely mentioned their ideas again. Nor have congressional Democrats stepped up to promote them.

One reason is ideology. Progressives remain uncomfortable with market pressures in education. They prefer to talk about teachers as saints who never worry about money. Most teachers *are* great people, and many perform heroically in impossible circumstances. But it is no insult to say that teachers are also human beings who vary in talent, who respond to incentives, and who need to be accountable like other professionals. At a time when capitalism has enhanced productivity around the world, there is something sad about liberals stopping performance pressure from improving the public institutions they hold dear.

Political opposition from teachers' unions is a different problem. Although the American Federation of Teachers has historically been open to performance pay, the much larger NEA (with the exception of one affiliate in Denver) opposes it. Both unions oppose serious tenure reform.

But the unions do not control the agenda. After four years of inaction on teacher quality, Bush has a performance-pay pilot—though one funded far less generously than Kerry had proposed. Republican governors like Tim Pawlenty and Arnold Schwarzenegger are pushing performance pay, and Schwarzenegger is putting tenure reform on California's ballot. Polls show broad public support for teaching reforms; performance pay, for example, is favored even by a majority of Democrats. A smart Republican presidential candidate will probably press teacher reform in 2008, as John McCain considered doing in 2000.

Progressives can let conservatives use teacher quality as a political bludgeon, or they can make the teacher agenda their own and attack the Bush administration's timidity. There is no question that the bolder course will cause some immediate political pain, but progressives must return to their roots as reformers if they are to recapture their leadership on an issue at the heart of their identity.

Many progressives are viscerally uncomfortable disagreeing with unions while the president is assailing already decimated rights to organize and bargain. But there has to be a distinction between supporting the rights of unions and supporting their every demand. And labor has a stake here, too. Support for reform feeds support for resources. The number of Americans who identify lack of funding as the biggest problem facing schools has risen since 2001, before NCLB passed. As Center for American Progress Fellow Ruy Teixeira puts it, "Democrats will never build big majorities for more spending on education, or any other social program, unless they convince more voters they'll spend the money well."

ADVANCING NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY and improving teacher quality should be only parts of a progressive education agenda. The achievement gap opens before children even reach elementary school, yet U.S. support for preschool lags well behind other nations. So progressives should press for big expansions in high-quality early education. Parents want some choice and diversity among schools. So progressives should renew their support for public school choice and charter schools. There is probably much else besides.

But there should be a common thread to the progressive agenda. It's about thinking big again. It's about offering resources and reform. And it's about believing in public schools enough to challenge them. If being a progressive means anything, it should mean believing that public institutions like schools can take the hard steps necessary to improve themselves and improve our society. It is honorable to defend a Social Security status quo that works, but it is something else to defend an education status quo that does not. When progressives get their policies back in line with their commitments, they will serve American children, and themselves. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Dealing With Families

SEEMINGLY, ARNAUD DESPLECHIN, French and forty-four, has two film-making selves. One of them is elegantly traditional, the other is eagerly modern. His new film, **KINGS AND QUEEN**, co-written with Roger Bohbot, is directed smartly. (This is his sixth picture, and the first of his that I have seen.) Every moment bespeaks a director who loathes cinematic cliché yet also loathes trickery. But that isn't enough for Desplechin.

KINGS AND QUEEN
(Wellspring)

TELL THEM WHO YOU ARE
(THINKFilm)

Kings and Queen has two stories, freestanding though linked. One of them is about Nora, the thirtyish manager of a Paris art gallery who has had two husbands. (At least that is what we are first told: later we learn that there were no marriages involved.) By the first man she has a son, now ten, who lives with his grandfather in Grenoble. She goes to visit them and finds that her father is terminally ill with cancer—something the old man himself didn't even realize. Nora is faced with the emergency, with the need to help her boy, with the need to summon her sister, who is a penniless swinger in Paris.

The other story is about Ismaël, Nora's second lover, from whom she has long been separated. He is a violist in a quartet when he is mentally competent, but that competence is a recurrent question. When we first meet him, two hospital attendants are calling for him at his apartment. As bright as he is unbalanced, he does some fancy verbal dueling with them before they can take him away. His adventures in the hospital include some further clever jousting with a psychiatrist and an affair with another patient, a suicidal girl whom he comforts.

Both these stories, which of course develop further, are more engaging than they may sound, because Desplechin directs them so intelligently and because they are so well acted. Emmanuelle Devos, as Nora, is not immediately attractive—her face is undistinguished—but her performance strengthens with every emotional moment, and there are plenty of them. Mathieu Amalric as Ismaël is a glittering angel-devil, mercurial, perceptive, and, as we have to concede, nutty. Further: Catherine Deneuve, in a one-scene role, is regal as a hospital supervisor, and Hippolyte Girardot, as Ismaël's young lawyer defending him in a tax suit, is almost his client's twin in caprice and cleverness.

Either of these two stories, with some expansion, could have made a film. Desplechin decided to combine them. He has said: "The challenge was to put together two opposing genres, the Hollywood-style melodrama of Nora's story with the pure comedy of Ismaël's story." (Pure comedy? Only in a cosmic view.) The challenge seems self-imposed. Desplechin may well have thought that if the two stories were left freestanding, they would be too conventional; so, perhaps to claim membership in advanced film circles, he interwove the stories, intercutting them all through the picture, uniting them only at the end with a dubious twist. With this braiding, Desplechin may have thought, he would avoid being linear and orthodox. Further to deck his film with chic, he divided it into parts with titles—to no purpose whatsoever—and he included some interview shots with Nora in which she speaks to the camera, shots that are unexplained and unnecessary. He also included a farcical robbery scene in Ismaël's father's shop—completely extraneous, something like a Truffaut gambol—and, most germane of all, he made sure that his picture had no point, other than cinematic adventure. We have all been sufficiently enlightened by latter-day criticism to know that clarity of line and discernible theme are fusty ideals. Still, it's a bit disconcerting to see a descendant of Renoir temper his work with a sort of hipness.

Two years ago there was *My Architect: A Son's Journey*, a documentary about the architect Louis I. Kahn by his son Nathaniel. Here now is **TELL THEM WHO YOU ARE**, a documentary by Mark S. Wexler about his father, Haskell Wexler, the distinguished American cinematographer. The son is an experienced photographer who has been making documentaries since 1993. The father has shot, among others, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *In the Heat of the Night*, *Coming Home*, *Matewan*, *Bound for Glory*; other films on which he worked were *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Days of Heaven*. He wrote and directed, and photographed, *Medium Cool*.

He is now in his eighties and is still very much on hand. Thus, quite apart from other matters, this picture is quite different from the Kahn film, which was something of a memorial. This one is a lively family affair. The Wexlers are fond of each other—Mark too appears in the film from time to time—but there is also considerable jousting between father and son. Mark indicates with his very title why he made the picture. Once, we are told, he was in some sort of jam, and his father said, "Tell them who you are," by which he obviously meant "Tell them you are Haskell Wexler's son." This film conveys a lot about the father, but it also conveys, along with the son's respect, his (garden-variety) resentment of his father's greater eminence.

Naturally there are brief appearances by actors who have worked with Wexler and by other colleagues, including Michael Douglas, Paul Newman, Julia Roberts, George Lucas, and Jane Fonda. Wexler accompanied Fonda on her second visit to Hanoi during the Vietnam War and shot a documentary about the trip. This was only one incident in a political life—"leftist" is his term—that, he thinks, was an obstacle to him in Hollywood.

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Yet he has had a notable career, and I wish there had been more specifics about it in the film. We hear glowing testimonials to his camera wizardry, and he has plentiful advice for his son on the making of this film, but I would have been grateful for some precise instances from his own work: why he framed a certain shot as he did or lighted another as he did. It was a necessary part of the portrait to include his political life, and it is moderately juicy to hear (especially in his son's film) about his extramarital love life, but still.... ■

JED PERL ON ART

Trembling

IN THE WORK OF HIS LATER YEARS, Rembrandt reached for a paradoxical power—a trembling, shivering power. His turbulent surfaces, with molten yellow highlights pitted against tarnished copper and blackened pewter shadows, envelop the men and the women who are at the center of nearly all his compositions. The atmosphere in these paintings, beginning in the mid-1650s and extending to the time of Rembrandt's death in 1669, is one of constant agitation, not fraught but expansive, an unsettling of experience that frees the artist from any predetermined pattern.

REMBRANDT'S LATE RELIGIOUS PORTRAITS (J. Paul Getty Museum)

Going through "Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits," the extraordinary exhibition that was at the National Gallery in Washington this winter and is now at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles until August 28, I found myself drawn deeper and deeper into the daunting and sometimes baffling variety of Rembrandt's painterly approach, which involves not only the brush bristles but also the palette knife and the wooden end of the brush and perhaps fingers as well. When the art historian Otto Benesch wrote about these canvases half a century ago, he described "a continuous vibrato of brushstrokes, flecks and scratches with the brush stick, nervous and utterly alive." The secret of this aliveness has everything to do with Rembrandt's unwillingness to settle on a method or a system. The protagonists in his late paintings—figures from the Bible or the classical past, or his contemporaries, or family members, or the artist himself—live in a world where all the old Renaissance oppositions between light and shade or volume and void, which had been set in a finely plotted perspectival space, have dissolved. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that this dissolution and the revolution that it provokes have taken place at once, for we can feel a simultaneous thinning and thickening of the atmosphere, a fading of all fixed or known structures followed swiftly by the emergence of a new, shocking concreteness.

To examine Rembrandt's canvases closely is to feel that you are in the presence of a man who has lived life with uncommon intensity, so that his contradictions and inconsistencies are never papered over or denied. Rembrandt's brushwork is enormously varied, with its loosely adjacent or crisscrossed or overlapped strokes and dabs and jabs, all of which retain their distinctive textures and colors even as they bear witness to the character of a gnarled hand, a youthful face, a bulky torso, an eye sparkling with life. Despite their ultimate shimmering coherence, these compositions appear to have developed piecemeal, as if the painting were an ongoing experiment, the result of a near infinity of separate decisions. The individuality of the mark—its color or combination of colors, its roughness or smoothness, its direction—is associated with the individuality of other marks, but it is a free association, so that each mark retains its own impulse, its own will. Rembrandt's surfaces—so fluid, so complex, so open-ended—are the substance out of which he forges his fearfully human heroes, with their tragic gestures, their harrowed features, their ardent flesh.

When Rembrandt created the portraits of Apostles and Evangelists that are at the core of this exhibition, he was using the painterly brushstroke to bring Matthew and Paul to life much as these men had used the power of words to make manifest the life and the teachings of Jesus. And, strangely enough, it is the very open-endedness of Rembrandt's paint-handling, his willingness to acknowledge a certain indeterminacy, that gives his religious figures their astonishing immediacy, their uncanny presentness. An artist who insisted more on the absolute completeness of a naturalistic illusion would deny these men their aura: by pushing them too close, an artist might well reduce them. So it is a certain unnaturalness, a certain abstractness, in Rembrandt's handling of paint that gives these Apostles their privileged status, their mysterious human-and-then-some power. When we look at the brilliantly illuminated hand of the Apostle Paul holding a pen, or his formidable head plunged into thought, we feel almost as if this hand and this head have been summoned up in the very moment that we are seeing them.

The brushwork in these paintings, at once insistent and informal, is one of the great examples of a late painterly style. Of course there are many kinds of painterliness, and many different artists work in different ways toward the ends of their lives. The quickening, silky drama of Rubens's painterly brushstroke is entirely different from the knotty bluntness of Rembrandt's. And although there is much in Rembrandt's late style that echoes the towering example of Titian, the haze of mingled colors that Rembrandt adapts from Titian feels more thoroughly melted together in Titian, more atomized and agitated in Rembrandt.

With Rembrandt, the construction of an illusion always suggests the collapse of an illusion. And if there is a valetudinarian quality about the fragility that Rembrandt builds into his powerful structures, it is this mysterious mobility, secreted deep in the quivering logic of his compositions, that both Corot and Cézanne embraced in their later work. In Corot's paintings of dark-eyed gypsies and in Cézanne's studies of his gardener, Rembrandt's indeterminacy—that watchful, empirical approach, so much an aspect of the early modern world's scientific spirit—becomes a form of anxiety, and the expression of a thoroughly modern experience.

It remained for two much younger men, Braque and Picasso, to liberate the

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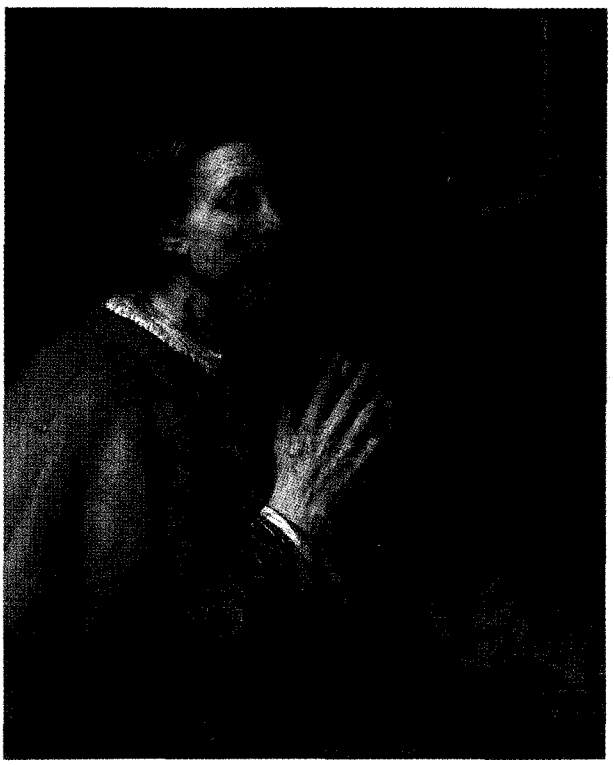
anti-illusionistic yearnings that had been implicit in Rembrandt's climactic style. In the Analytic Cubist canvases that they were painting in the years before World War I, these artists detached Rembrandt's shivering strokes and floating darks and lights from representation itself. They discovered a youthful playfulness and eagerness within the aging artist's undaunted adventurousness. And the scrambled chiaroscuro of those Cubist canvases, in which the figure just barely holds the stage, suggests an X ray of Rembrandt's world—a welter of paint strokes, a gorgeous abyss from which the old artist pulled his most palpably human presences.

"Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits," which was presented at the National Gallery with a minimum of pomp, in two galleries within the permanent collection, is first and foremost an opportunity to immerse ourselves in the work of a great painter at the height of his powers. There should be more exhibitions that are so appealingly modest in size. Art historians have long speculated that the paintings of Apostles and Evangelists that Rembrandt was working on around 1660, together with some studies of Christ and the Virgin Mary, may have been created in response to a commission, or perhaps conceived by Rembrandt as a cycle even if there was no commission in hand. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., the curator at the National Gallery who organized the exhibition, sees this small show as an opportunity to test this hypothesis. When scholars view all the paintings together, some of which are in fact very close in size, they can compare the handling of paint and other physical characteristics, and determine if such factors support a hypothesis that may never be proved through documentary evidence. It is a hypothesis that some observers regard skeptically, since in Protestant Holland there would have been scant call for cycles devoted to Apostles or Evangelists, although the possibility of a commission from certain Protestant groups or from a Catholic patron, perhaps a private patron, cannot be ruled out.

While the circumstances under which these paintings were created are certainly interesting, I think the organizers may have insisted a bit too much on the exhibition as a sort of puzzle. Like many shows with an intricate argument, this one has tended to inspire a competitive spirit in critics and in some museumgoers as well, who are anxious to poke holes in the argument or to offer their own counter-arguments, and some of this thinking detracts attention from the larger themes. Since the limits of the cycle or cycles presented here are unclear, the organizers have quite rightly included more than the paintings that are undoubtedly of Apostles and Evangelists. One may question the presence of a portrait of Hendrickje Stoffels, which some believe is a representation of the Sorrowing Virgin. The portrait *A Bearded Man in a Cap* is not said to fit into any of these possible cycles, but is included because it represents a Jewish man who is also the model for *The Apostle Paul* and *Saint Bavo*. And *Monk Reading*, which may or (more likely) may not represent Saint Francis, has a rather more recessive quality than the key works in the show. If one approaches the exhibition with many questions about how the works relate to one another, the questions just keep popping up, and the result is that the show can look almost conceptually thin and somewhat tendentious. Yet when you regard "Rembrandt's Late Religious Portraits" with a truly open mind, it proves to be one of the richest exhibitions of recent years.



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REMBRANDT, *The Apostle James the Major*, 1661

This is, in many respects, the exhibition that Otto Benesch must have been dreaming about when he wrote his extraordinary essay about these paintings, published in *The Art Quarterly* in 1956, an essay that Wheelock cites as one of the founding achievements in the study of Rembrandt's late religious portraits. Benesch evokes a certain mood, a certain atmosphere, and he evokes this with a flood of lyric prose that envelops the reader in a way that brings to mind passages in Pater's essays on the Renaissance. He argues that the portraits of religious figures grew organically out of Rembrandt's approach to portraiture in general. He believes that Rembrandt's rejection of outward appearance—which is reflected in the unhappiness that his clients sometimes registered at his lack of interest in a straightforward likeness—was fueled by his concern with projecting "his own mental and human qualities into his models, assimilating them to himself and his spiritual world." For Rembrandt, Benesch observes, portraiture was "a revelation of the artist no less than of his sitters. It was to its creator an artistic problem, self-chosen, as deep and personal as any religious subject; his attitude toward the mystery of a human soul"—any human soul—was "as devout as toward the Holy Writ in which he was so deeply absorbed." And by the late 1650s, as this view of portraiture as an exploration of deep aspects of personality became increasingly dominant in Rembrandt's work, the idea of creating portraits of Apostles, of Evangelists, and of Christ and the Virgin would arise almost naturally, whether there was a commission or not.

There was a tradition in Baroque art of the *portrait historié*, or the representation of a contemporary figure in a historical guise, but Rembrandt had no use for the element of impersonation involved in such works. For him, the direct

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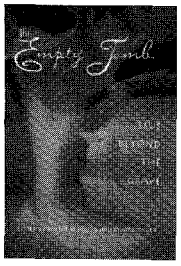

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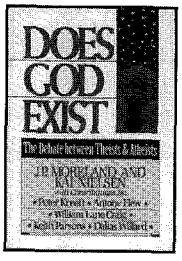

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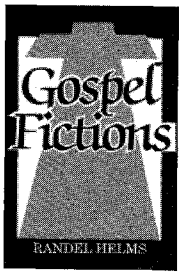

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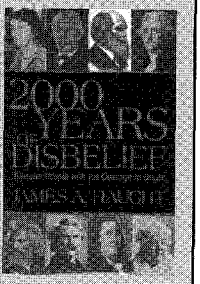

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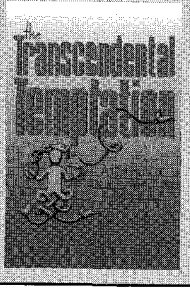

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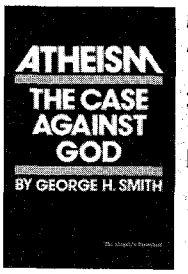

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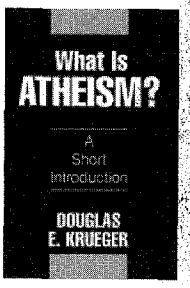

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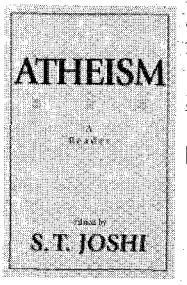

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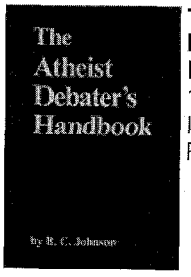

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confrontation involved in contemporary portraiture and the more speculative processes necessitated by religious portraiture did not fit so tidily together; they were, instead, complementary activities that could be overlapped or intermingled, as they are in one of the greatest paintings in this exhibition, *Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul*. Here Rembrandt paints himself with a touching, penetrating modesty. His gaze, with those dark, tender, yet in some way inscrutable eyes, is at once pensive and pleading. The book, which he holds out in front of himself so that he also seems to be offering it to us, is at once a text with a private meaning for the artist and the Gospel that Paul must bring to the world. The painting is not so much of Rembrandt taking on the role of Paul, with his book and the sword that signifies his martyrdom, but of a welter of associations giving rise to a welter of feelings, so that Rembrandt's reflections on himself and his contemporaries melt into his speculations about the nature of Christ, or God, or man.

One always senses, in these portraits, an overlay of themes. And it is Rembrandt's way of moving so easily, so unself-consciously, between a personal encounter and something more like a historical reconstruction that gives the works their geological surprises. In the sumptuous *The Evangelist Matthew and the Angel*, from the Louvre, with its goldmine of brushwork, the head of the angel whispering into Matthew's ear is none other than that of Rembrandt's son Titus, and the intimacy of the pose makes us feel that Rembrandt, in imagining Titus as the angel, is imagining Titus whispering into the artist's own ear, too. The effect is not of one character becoming another, of a contemporary figure inhabiting an older role completely, as much as it is a quality of echoing awarenesses, of a commingling of consciousnesses. Rembrandt has no interest in the realist's orderly reconstruction of time and space. In an inventory taken in his studio, a study of Christ that pre-dates by a few years the portrait of a handsome young Jewish Christ in this exhibition was listed as "A head of Christ, a study from life." The description is telling, because the painting is indeed both things, of both times and places, and this is exactly what one feels in the Christ from the Hyde Collection in Glen Falls. Through the young Jewish man of Rembrandt's day we glimpse Christ and through Christ we glimpse the young Jewish man.

THIS IS AN EXHIBITION FULL of canvases in which nothing much seems to happen. This is odd, considering that Rembrandt's heroes are men who precipitated great events, or witnessed those events, or brought those events and their meanings to the attention of others, and who often lived hard lives and died hideous deaths. We see the emblems of their lives—the writing implements with which they told their stories, the instruments of torture that wracked their flesh. But in Rembrandt's portraits we generally encounter these men at some distance from the lives they lived, in an indistinct, interiorized realm, where past and present, action and reflection, the real and the spiritual are set in a quivering equilibrium that originates in the very movements of Rembrandt's brush. Rembrandt's heroes are in a state of suspension, disconnected both from what has been and what will be. Benesch speaks of these as "'free portraits,' creations to which the master was inspired by the interest the sitter evoked in him." I think we can go further and think of the setting as a "free setting," an environment that Rembrandt has found to be friendly to these evocations.

When these paintings are gathered together, what is striking is not so much the affinities between the individual figures as those between the situations in which they find themselves—the sense of the figure as located in a place that is no place in particular and yet has its own kind of particularity. When the setting is at all specific, it is the scholar's study, suggested elliptically, with the bare table and book, in *The Evangelist Matthew and the Angel* and in the extraordinary, deeply impastoed *Man in a Red Cap*, or with a chair added in *The Apostle Paul*. But even a painting such as *Saint Bavo*, where the shadowy horse in the background suggests the out-of-doors, comes from the same inward-turning realm, a realm that surely had a special resonance for Rembrandt. For what this setting brings to mind, again and again, is the space to which the artist retreats to do his work. We know that well before Rembrandt's day, the most ambitious artists had conceived of themselves not so much as workers in a shop buzzing with activity, but as solitary creators who favored a private workroom where they might draw, study prints and drawings by the masters, read, and plan future works. Even as far back as the Middle Ages, artists must have seen, in manuscript representations of Evangelists at their desks, affinities with their own labors. And in the Renaissance the image of Saint Luke, the artist who painted the Virgin, often doubled as an idealized self-portrait of the modern artist.

Time and again in Rembrandt's religious portraits, we see a man who has withdrawn into a room where he meditates, reflects, or composes an account that bears witness to what he has seen and felt and understood. And when Rembrandt paints himself as Paul, isn't he saying that this is what he does, too? The painter experiences so many things and then turns away from the world to create his account, which he hopes will in turn go out into the world. The entire cycle of religious portraits shows a variety of men turning to this place of reflection and contemplation, to the place that the artist knows so well. There is *The Apostle Bartholomew*, with his tough face and muscular old hands, who—in Benesch's words—"reminds one more of a butcher than of a man ennobled by thought." And there is *The Apostle James the Major*, whom Benesch sees as "a donor in a Gothic panel painting. His face is sealed, betraying nothing but mystic absorption in prayer." Each of Rembrandt's figures is unique, a person with his own weight of experience. The common thread is not so much who they are as where they find themselves. Nowhere else in art is there such a strong sense that reflection is a form of action. These are the most disquietingly, intensely, insistently philosophical paintings that have ever been done.

"REMBRANDT'S LATE RELIGIOUS Portraits" is an unforgettably eloquent exhibition, and if it has not received quite the ecstatic response that it deserves, I suspect that the blame lies with a certain discomfort, almost a kind of embarrassment, that now shadows Rembrandt's immense reputation. For decades, many art historians have been in revolt against the old idea that Rembrandt was a solitary, heroic creator, the sort of figure who once preoccupied writers such as Romain Rolland and Thomas Mann. From Svetlana Alpers's studies of Rembrandt's relations with the seventeenth-century art market through

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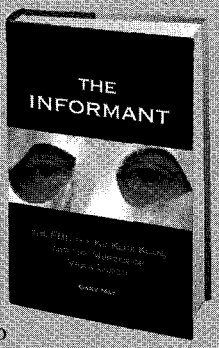

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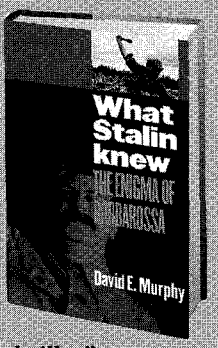

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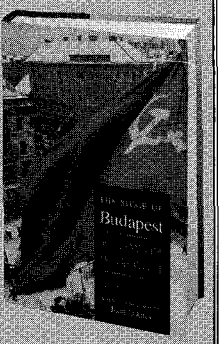

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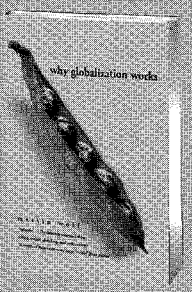

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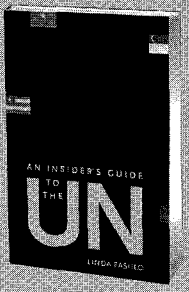

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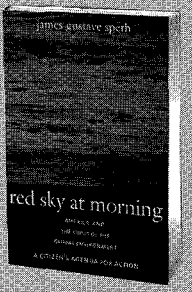

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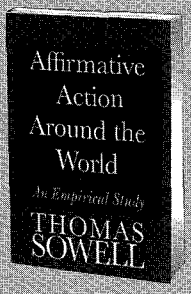

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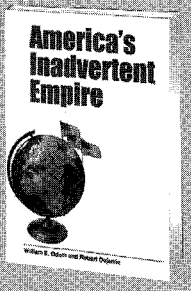

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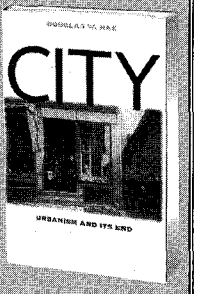

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the sometimes maddening pedantry of the Rembrandt Research Project and the exercises in populist, do-it-yourself connoisseurship such as the Metropolitan's "Rembrandt/Not Rembrandt" show in 1996, there has been an effort to debunk what is regarded the Rembrandt myth—which is a variation on the myth of the artist as hero—and replace it with a view of Rembrandt as a canny (and sometimes less than canny) entrepreneur. While few visitors to this exhibition are necessarily aware of the shifting direction of Rembrandt studies, this sea change in scholarly orientation has by now affected the very circumstances in which Rembrandt is experienced, so that museumgoers may almost unconsciously react against their initially awestruck responses. Confronted with works that unsettle ordinary expectations, they may imagine that the safest course is to banalize their own reactions. The public may believe that it is more sophisticated to assume that one is being manipulated than actually to allow oneself to be moved.

What today's aggressively anti-idealist approach to Rembrandt cannot account for is the ability that certain artists have to confound the realities—commercial or iconographic or formal—out of which their work arises. When Michelangelo, Rembrandt, and Beethoven were spoken of as titans in the nineteenth century, what was being acknowledged was the extent to which these artists answered a human need for something grand and heroic—a need that has existed, or so I believe, in every age. To deny the force of such artists, to whittle Rembrandt down to size, is not only to reject the power of certain works but also to sidestep a challenging question in the study of aesthetics. For there are aspects of Rembrandt's appeal that challenge some of our most abiding assumptions about the freestanding power of art.

There are people who would argue that Rembrandt is simply a greater painter than, say, Chardin, and explain his wider appeal in this way; but I do not find this explanation satisfactory. There are still lifes by Chardin that are every bit as deep and as subtle as anything that Rembrandt ever painted, and Chardin, working with a few humble kitchen objects on a stone shelf, offers glimpses of the temporal as it melts into the eternal that are as compelling as anything in Rembrandt's self-portraits. And yet who can doubt that with Rembrandt, as with Michelangelo and Shakespeare and Beethoven, the force of the work reflects something more than the artist's absolute mastery of formal values? These creators wrest from the subtleties of their craft an earth-shattering matter-of-factness—a transcendent pragmatism that still has the power to shock. In Rembrandt's greatest paintings—in some of the self-portraits, and some of the portraits of his family, and in biblical works such as *Saul and David*—the artistic avowal suggests an ultimate, exultant transparency. Even as Rembrandt embraces all the intricacies of his craft, and with the kind of intentness and intensity that we recognize also in an artist such as Chardin, he is simplifying his craft. He insists on an experience that is utterly open, a primer of artistic expression that he holds up in front of us, much as he holds open the pages of the book in *Self-Portrait as the Apostle Paul*. Rembrandt, too, is an apostle—an apostle not so much of art in itself, but of art in the very widest sense, as the life of the mind in all its ripe, sensuous possibility. ■

Gordon S. Wood
Colonial Correctness

THE UNKNOWN AMERICAN REVOLUTION: THE UNRULY BIRTH OF DEMOCRACY AND THE STRUGGLE TO CREATE AMERICA
By Gary B. Nash
(Viking, 512 pp., $27.95)

GARY B. NASH HAS HAD a long and distinguished career writing about the various oppressed and downtrodden peoples in early America. Almost from the beginning of his career, in the mid-1960s, Nash has been preoccupied with issues of inequality, class conflict, and cultural interaction in early America. In *Red, White, and Black: The Peoples of Early America*, in 1974, he was one of the first historians to call for the integration of Indians and Africans into the story of the settlement of colonial America—not as victims, but as peoples who actively influenced the character of the colonial past. Giving the Indians and the Africans a more prominent role meant that the older white-dominated success story of early America would have to change, ideally to be replaced by a more complicated story of cultural conflict and cultural intermingling.

Nash next turned to the origins of the American Revolution, and in *Urban Crucible*, in 1979, he argued that the tensions arising from poverty and other underlying social and economic inequalities in the cities led to a radical lower-class politics that helps to account for the Revolution. Over the past several decades, Nash has devoted himself to the study of African American slavery and African American anti-slave movements—subjects on which he has written his best work. At the same time, together with Charlotte Crabtree at UCLA, he launched the National History Standards Project with funds supplied by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The published work, *National Standards for United States History: Exploring the American Experience*, which appeared in 1994, was repudiated by former NEH head Lynne Cheney, who had funded it, and disowned by the U.S. Senate by a vote of ninety-nine to one, though few senators actually read the standards.

Through all the controversies and attacks—from the left and from the right—Nash never lost his faith that a fairer, more just, and more equitable America could be created by a more "inclusive" historiography, by historians uncovering all the inequities and brutalities of early America, especially those inflicted on Native Americans, African slaves, and poor lower-class whites. Although he did not write extensively on women in early America, inevitably he has been sympathetic to their cause as well. Nash has always sought to project his political vision into his history-writing.

As much as anyone, Nash seems to

Gordon S. Wood is Alva O. Way University Professor and Professor of History at Brown University and author of THE AMERICANIZATION OF BENJAMIN FRANKLIN *(Penguin).*

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represent the best of the "race, class, gender" historians of the past generation, who have succeeded remarkably in transforming the kind of history taught in many colleges and universities. His role as one of the leaders of this major historiographical transformation makes his new book on the American Revolution all the more significant. Here Nash applies the "race, class, gender" formula to what is arguably the most important event in American history.

ALTHOUGH NASH HAS TITLED his book *The Unknown American Revolution*, his interpretation of the Revolution may not be as unknown as he makes it out to be, owing to the revisionist work of many academic historians over the past four decades. As a result of this work, many people now know who Crispus Attucks is. (But can anyone name the other four victims of the Boston Massacre?) Of course, if polls of seniors from leading colleges and universities are to be believed, many events of the Revolution appear to be unknown by even the best-educated Americans. Only 34 percent of college seniors were able to identify George Washington as an American general at the battle of Yorktown. Only 23 percent knew that James Madison was the "Father of the Constitution." When Nash laments the "historical amnesia" of Americans, he doesn't appreciate the half of it.

Nash intends his book to be "a history of inclusion," an effort to bring into the story of the Revolution those who have been long forgotten: poor whites, Indians, African Americans, women. Compared with the likes of Washington and Madison, these people may have been lowly and insignificant, but they "did not see themselves as puppets dancing on the strings of the supposed leaders." They were instead "agents of change" in a "people's revolution," which was "an upheaval among the most heterogeneous people to be found anywhere along the Atlantic littoral in the eighteenth century."

By concentrating on these forgotten people, Nash's account, or so he believes, will capture "the true radicalism of the American Revolution." It will demonstrate the Revolution's "highly diverse and fragmented character" and put to rest once and for all the comfortable notion of "united colonists rising up as a unified body to get the British lion's paw off the backs of their necks." It is not clear who any longer believes that the colonists rose up against the British as a unified body. Certainly no reputable historian of the Revolution believes it. But Nash seems to need such straw men—"a unified story of the nation's birth"—and he sets them up throughout his book so as to knock them easily down.

In fact, beneath all Nash's multicultural inclusions there exists a rather old-fashioned interpretation of the Revolution. Nash's book is an updated version of the old Progressive interpretation of the Revolution made famous almost a century ago by such historians as Carl Becker, Charles Beard, and Arthur Schlesinger Sr. Becker is the historian who made the well-known quip that the Revolution was not only about home rule, it was also about who was to rule at home. Nash accepts this dual nature of the Revolution—"It was a civil war at home as well as a military struggle for national liberation"—and refers to it throughout his book. Like the older Progressive historians, he sees two fairly coherent groups—the radicals made up of ordinary laboring

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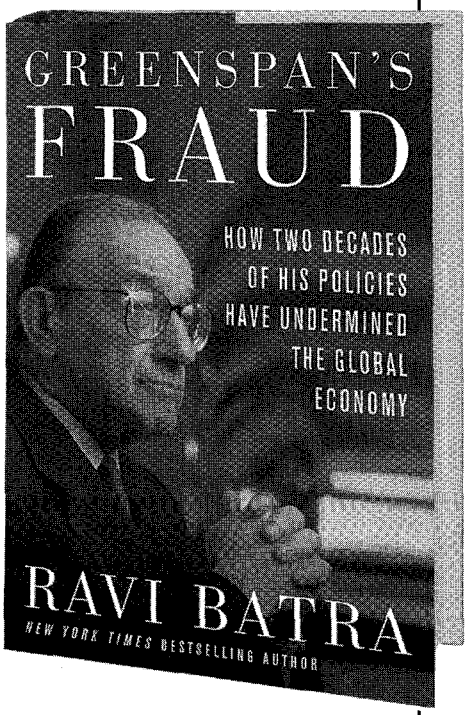
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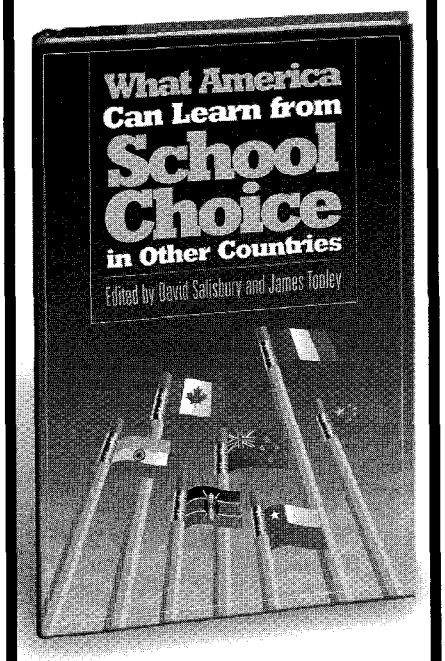

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people and the conservatives dominated by rich exploitative elites—struggling for control throughout the period.

NASH HAS DIVIDED HIS CHAPTERS into chronological units: 1761–1766, 1766–1774, 1774–1776, and so on to his final chapter, 1781–1785. In each of these chronologically organized chapters, he describes one after the other the actions of the oppressed and abused peoples with whom he is concerned. In Virginia, they were "the driving force for Independence," and in no place were they ever a minority. "In reality," he says, these downtrodden people in "the nether strata of colonial society and ... outside 'respectable' society were *most* of the people of revolutionary society." For these forgotten people, "for the people whom this book has featured, the Revolution was visionary and experimental." And again: "Without their ideas, dreams, and blood sacrifice, the American Revolution would never have occurred, would never have followed the course that we can now comprehend, and would never have reverberated around the world among oppressed people down to the present day."

So much for all the ringing statements of Patrick Henry, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and other great white males. In Nash's view, these elite leaders of the Revolution—the celebrated Founders—were "reluctant revolutionaries" who had to be dragged into revolution by all the forgotten people below them. The problem is that many, if not most, of Nash's forgotten and oppressed people either fought or wanted to fight on the side of the British, so it is hard to know what to make of his claims.

Those ordinary people who did support the Revolution may not be quite as forgotten as Nash assumes. We now have many social histories of common people in the colonial era (for example, in the work of Howard Zinn). Moreover, no respectable historian, even those who write big popular biographies of George Washington and John Adams, has ever denied that the Revolution's success depended upon the participation of masses of ordinary people. But gaining recognition of the participation of ordinary people in the Revolution is not really Nash's aim. He wants to show that those lowly people "*not* in positions of power and privilege" had their own agendas and, as the fashionable phrase goes, their own "agency" in bringing on the Revolution.

Nash's "lower-class and enslaved people, whom colonial leaders had always hoped to keep in the wings, if not offstage altogether," were now determined to assert themselves. These oppressed people were the popular radicals who carried on the Revolution in the face of opposition from elite conservatives who "tried to squash the popular movements of the early war years." Since Nash holds a quasi-Marxian view of American society, his "laboring-class people" necessarily become the "poor" who "suffered" from exploitation by "the wealthy." In the end, it was this exploitation that made these "laboring classes" rise up against their rich rulers.

Although the white colonists in British North America enjoyed the highest standard of living of any people in the Western world, one would never know it from Nash's account. In his early America, no common person seems to have been satisfied with his lot. "Most" people in Boston, for example, "had fared badly" in the eighteenth century; indeed, merchants and other rich people for more than a generation had "disdained humble Bostonians and totted up their profits while the poor suffered." According to Nash, poverty was everywhere, especially in the cities, where by the 1770s there were "men in great numbers who experienced class oppression firsthand and were learning to express themselves openly." Even more erroneous is his view of the Virginians. He says they lived in a "highly stratified society, where tenant farmers greatly outnumbered landowners." Tenancy certainly existed in Virginia, but in no way was it the normal form of landholding.

NASH'S EVIDENCE FOR POPULAR resistance to all this class exploitation is the incidents of rural rioting and urban mobbing that took place in the decade or so leading up to the Revolution. This mobbing and rioting is exceedingly familiar to historians, who have produced a literature about it. Unfortunately, these phenomena do not support Nash's argument. Not only did the rural rioting have little or nothing to do with the Revolution, but the urban mobs, which were indeed directed at British authority, did not represent the class upheaval that Nash assumes. The rural riots all arose out of peculiar local circumstances, and were hardly expressions of some sort of coherent class warfare.

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In New York in the 1760s, farmers, mostly immigrants from New England, where fee-simple landholding was the rule, rose in protest against what they believed were the archaic tenancy schemes of their New York landlords. In western North Carolina, and also in western Pennsylvania, rioters protested not only against unequal representation in the remote eastern assemblies, but also, in the case of North Carolina, against local fee-gouging by carpetbagging officials, and, in the case of Pennsylvania, against the Quaker-dominated assembly's pacifist unwillingness to aid the mostly Scots-Irish westerners in their fights against Indians. Contrary to Nash's contention, many of these rural rioters were anything but representative of most of the revolutionaries. In North Carolina, indeed, the westerners, angry at the eastern patriot government, often remained loyal to the British crown and fought against the revolutionary cause. The same was true of many of the rioting tenants in New York.

Since Pennsylvania experienced the most radical change in 1776, largely through the efforts of Scots-Irish farmers and urban artisans, Nash gives its new state constitution a good deal of attention. The constitution provided for a unicameral legislature, term limits, a broad suffrage, and a plural executive. The constitution also stipulated that the assembly be re-apportioned every seven years. "This commitment to proportional representation," Nash observes, "was followed by no other state." It is a strange statement, since four other states—New Jersey, New York, Vermont, South Carolina—wrote into their constitutions specific plans for periodic adjustments of their representation, so that, as the New York constitution stated, it "shall for ever remain proportionate and adequate." This error is only one of many that Nash makes throughout his book. He mistakes Horace Walpole for his father Robert Walpole as prime minister of England. He writes that "American colonists, with rare exceptions, agreed that Parliament was entitled to pass external taxes meant to control the flow of trade," even though Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan decisively refuted this point more than fifty years ago. He refers to Edmund Randolph as Jefferson's son-in-law, confusing him with Thomas Mann Randolph. He says that Richard Henry Lee was "destined to be one of Washington's generals," mixing him up with his cousin Harry Lee. Small matters, perhaps; but cumulatively they tend to undermine the reader's confidence in Nash's knowledge of the period.

Nash greatly admires the radical Pennsylvania constitution of 1776. He thinks that, with its decentralized government and broad suffrage, it came closest of all the state constitutions to achieving a more democratic and equitable society. Of course, the fact that all the elites of Pennsylvania and elsewhere hated it makes it especially appealing to Nash. No leader disliked the Pennsylvania constitution more than John Adams. This gives Nash the opportunity to bash this famous revolutionary, whose own constitutional achievement—the Massachusetts constitution of 1780—protected the rich and offended "those who stared at poverty." Adams, Nash says, "loved liberty but not equality, and from this position he would not budge through the entire course of the long Revolution."

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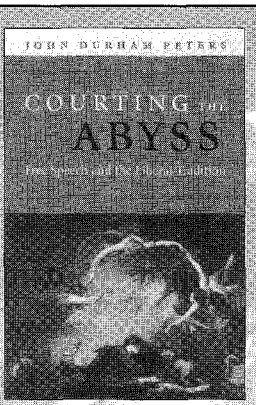

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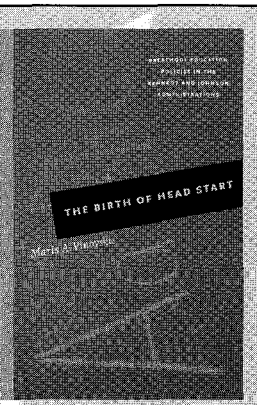

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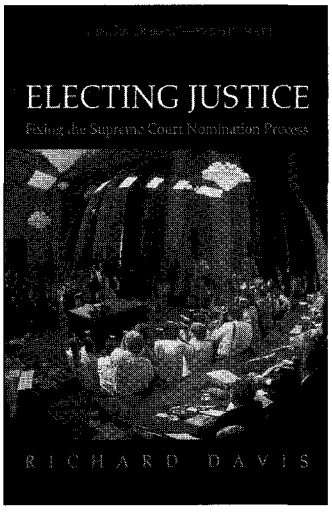

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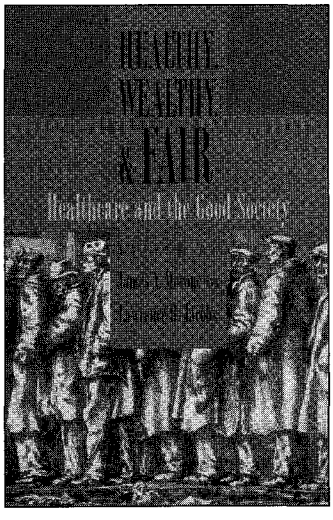

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This is an odd claim to make about someone who wrote ten years before the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal," and who worried about the power of aristocracy his entire life. As R.R. Palmer remarked many years ago, "It seems hardly possible that anyone could read the *Defense of the Constitutions of the United States* without seeing that aristocracy was Adams' principal bugaboo."

Not only does Nash misunderstand the rural riots, but he misreads the urban mobbing of the 1760s and 1770s as well. Although these urban mobs were directed at various royal officials and could be very disorderly, they were not unusual. Indeed, they were characteristic of eighteenth-century Anglo-American crowd behavior on both sides of the Atlantic—common protests by various groups against a perceived communal wrong, from the harsh impressment of sailors to temporary shortages of food. But Nash sees them very differently. He depicts them as direct challenges by the lower classes to the exploitative upper classes. In Boston, he writes, "the mobbish attackers were those who had suffered economic hardship while others fattened their purses." Because the mobs were a form of class warfare, he says, "the 'mob' has been feared throughout history by upper-class power holders, and historians have not been immune from this fear."

I don't know which historians Nash has in mind, but he certainly writes as if he has never heard of the work on eighteenth-century American mobs by Pauline Maier and Paul Gilje, who have no fear of mobs. As those scholars have superbly demonstrated, the premodern mobs, far from being preludes to revolutionary class warfare, were often testimonies to the paternal and hierarchical organization of society. Effigy hangings and status reversals in which the lowly acted the part of their betters (making the village idiot king for a day, for example) were protests, to be sure, and they certainly could get out of hand; but generally they worked to emphasize the existing hierarchy of society. Often they grew out of, and had much in common with, traditional saturnalian festivals and popular rites. Far from fearing such mobs, many of the elite participated in them. Even the arch Tory Thomas Hutchinson admitted in 1768 that "mobs, a sort of them at least, are constitutional."

BUT WHAT OF ALL THE RHETORIC about the laboring people contesting the aristocratic few that Nash draws on to make his case for class warfare? There was indeed a serious division in eighteenth-century American society that reverberated through the northern states over the succeeding decades, but it was not the one that Nash describes. Instead of being divided between a rich upper class and a poor working class, as Nash sees it, anachronistically anticipating a later nineteenth-century division between employers and employees, eighteenth-century American society was in fact still divided between a leisured gentry and the mass of artisans and other laborers who worked with their hands—many of them the businessmen of the future.

Since Aristotle's day, leisured elites had held those who worked, especially those who worked with their hands, in great contempt, as mean and despicable beings; such contempt for work was what justified slavery for thousands of years. But since the seventeenth century, if not earlier, ever-growing numbers of these laboring people had increased in wealth and self-consciousness to the point where these artisans, tradesmen, and others began calling themselves "middling sorts," caught between the gentry and those below them. Since the gentry continued to hold in contempt these men who worked with their hands or who ran shops with many employees where such work went on, it was inevitable that the middling sorts, angry and resentful at being so long denigrated, would mount increasing protests against arrogant leisured elites, including landed gentry, big merchants, and professionals, who unlike today's professionals did not put in many billable hours. To be thought vile and inferior because they worked became more and more insufferable to the growing numbers of artisans, tradesmen, and market farmers in the North, especially since they were sometimes wealthier than the aristocratic elites who looked down on them. So there was social conflict in the Revolution, but it was not quite the kind of class conflict that Nash presumes.

Nash is correct when he says that "all politics takes place within social and economic contexts." If we need a social force to explain the Revolution as it worked itself out in the northern states, we can do no better than to focus on these middling sorts who used the egali-

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tarian rhetoric of the Revolution to justify their cause, an often exaggerated rhetoric that Nash usually reads literally. If all these middling people were suffering from oppression, it was largely psychological or cultural oppression, because many of them were quite economically well-off. By the early nineteenth century, these middling people had destroyed the leisured pretensions of would-be aristocrats in the northern states and had made work a badge of honor to a degree not duplicated in any other Western nation. Not that they made the society's distribution of wealth more equal; indeed, as Nash knows only too well, because he was one of the first to document it, wealth in northern society was less equally distributed after the Revolution than before. Still, people felt more equal, wealth being the least humiliating form of asserting superiority over another; and this paradox can be explained only by the decline in the older idea of aristocracy and a radical change in the meaning of work.

Nash is so bound up in the modern Marxian categories of class warfare that he can make little sense of what happened. Since wealth alone was not the source of the social division, Nash has trouble understanding how the gentry could look down upon a very wealthy tradesman like Benjamin Franklin as long as he still ran his printing firm. As far as the gentry were concerned, a printer-businessman, no matter how rich and no matter how many employees he had, was still a laborer. (If one wants to explain the Revolution in Marxian class terms, it probably is best seen as a bourgeois revolution, at least in the North.)

Since, for Nash, only actual economic oppression and real poverty can account for a revolution, he has to exaggerate the deplorable conditions under which the laboring people suffered. Thus he writes that "urban poverty challenged the governing modes of thought, shook confidence in the internal economic system, and intensified class feeling." Getting rich in America was "an illusion." Debtors were always poor, with their backs to the wall. "Nagging poverty at the bottom of society and the crumbling of economic security in the middle gave rise to the most intense concern about the future." The Revolution became a response to all these class tensions and split the society into two coherent groups of poor radicals and rich conservatives. "It was the new vigor of urban laboring people in defining and pursuing their goals that raised the specter, in the minds of many upper-class townsmen, of a radicalized form of politics and a radically changed society."

In his description of eighteenth-century white society, Nash has inverted everything and changed the proportions of things. Instead of being the wealthiest and most equitable society in the eighteenth-century Western world, at least for whites, American society in Nash's account becomes a poverty-stricken, class-ridden place where rich and poor were at each other's throats. Nash never quite reconciles this woeful view of American society with the one that (as he admits) had the broadest ownership of farmland of any place in the Western world.

LOCKED INTO HIS MARXIAN CATegories, Nash inevitably misinterprets what was happening in the society, especially in the crucial decade of the 1780s. Although the war against Britain was winding down

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after Yorktown, he writes, "the war against poverty and the yawning gap between rich and poor was far from over." For most farmers, he says, the end of the Revolution "did not bring equality or enhanced economic opportunities." Instead, poverty, increasing debt, and "less than rosy prospects" characterized the years following the Revolution.

This seriously misreads the decade. No doubt debtors did get hurt during economic downswings, especially when the Massachusetts government in the 1780s increased taxes and tried to amortize its debt too quickly. But to see debtors as "the poor" is to misunderstand what was happening in the economy. Borrowing money, as any generation in American history could appreciate, was a sign not of poverty, but of heightened expectations. People wanted to trade and exchange goods with one another. To do so they needed money, lots of it, and since gold and silver (real money) were scarce, they pressured their governments to print paper money. Commercial activity, democracy, and paper money went together, as the experience of the most commercial and democratic colony and state in the country, Rhode Island, demonstrates: it was the colony and state that printed by far the most paper money.

Despite economic fluctuations and political disorder, the 1780s were anything but wretched. As the British demographer J. Potter long ago pointed out, the 1780s were the fastest-growing decade demographically in the whole of American history. This growth was owed not to immigration, which was negligible, but to the decisive fact that people had high expectations and were marrying earlier and having more children. Many Americans were actively pursuing the promise of happiness that Jefferson had held out to them, something that Joyce Appleby has brilliantly documented in her work. The "unrestrained capitalism" that Nash scornfully talks about emerging in the 1780s was the product not, as he thinks, of a few mandarins such as Robert Morris and Alexander Hamilton, but rather of the emerging middling multitudes of small producers, craftsmen-entrepreneurs, and market farmers—his "laboring people"—who hitherto have been the oppressed heroes of his story.

IN DEALING WITH THE PARTICIPATION of women in the Revolution, Nash pretty much follows the latest historical literature, except he goes too far in turning Abigail Adams into a proto-feminist, taking literally all her teasing of her husband and emphasizing that she seriously believed the point "about men enslaving women." In order to demonstrate that women were "agents of change" in the Revolution, he rather patronizingly lists all the contributions they made—from boycotting British goods, ostracizing loyalists, and leading food riots to making homespun and becoming camp followers of the Continental Army. "The army, in fact," he says, "could not do without women." Since this has been true of armies from time immemorial, it hardly seems something to celebrate as peculiarly American or as an assertion of women's agency. And most radical feminists presumably would regard camp following as patriarchal oppression run wild.

Unlike many earlier studies of women and the Revolution, Nash's account does see real progress for women coming out of the Revolution—in education, in literacy, and in participation in civic and benevolent activities. By the 1790s, with more and more talk of the equality of women, the Revolution had begun to erode the patriarchal world of the ancien régime. But Nash has much more difficulty relating his other "agents of change" to the Revolution—the Indians and African American slaves. His difficulty does not come from his excellent accounts of the experiences of Native Americans and the free and enslaved blacks during the Revolution. It derives, rather, from his attempts to relate these accounts to his understanding of the Revolution as an upheaval of forgotten people.

Perhaps Nash should have simply written off the Revolution as a failure, as some younger historians have done. They consider the Revolution a failure because, as one of them writes, it "failed to free the slaves, failed to offer full political equality to women . . . failed to grant citizenship to Indians, [and] failed to create an economic world in which all could compete on equal terms." If Nash shared that belief, he would have an easier time dealing with the fate of the Indians and the black slaves. To his credit, he does not believe the Revolution was a failure, "even for those with the most expansive ideas about a truly free, just, and equal society." It was, like all other revolutions, simply "incomplete."

But how could it have been made more complete for the Indians and the black slaves? For the Indians, the Revolution was a catastrophe. Many of the Indian nations allied themselves with the British, rightly assuming that the British crown could better protect their hunting grounds than the land-hungry Americans. Then the British government, in the peace treaty of 1783, ceded sovereignty over all Indian lands up to the Mississippi to the United States. And because so many Indians had fought on the side of the British, Americans tended to regard

Checklist

There was a lot to be done before I grew.
The flowery bedspread had to go.

Then the voice. Hello. I taped myself
getting dressed, mouthing "I understand your concern."

I rose early. I read books
downstairs before anyone was awake.

My parents told me to go outside.
Diving downward through the river.

Glimpses of bridges; peering upward through the blue
as faces rose away. I wrote it down.

On my hand, a pine tree, sap
you can't wash off. Love.

A line of cars humming down the road in silence. Then silence.
The ditch beside the empty house, the rivulets,

the sun just leaving, the red light
retreating, the sun, the ditch, the house.

MEGHAN O'ROURKE

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as enemies even those Indians who had been their allies.

Trying to extract some kind of worthwhile significance for the Indians out of the Revolution is not easy. If the Revolution was "rooted in a kind of dream life of a better future imagined by those who felt most dissatisfied with the conditions they experienced as the quarrel with Great Britain unfolded," then it did not have much to offer the native peoples. It is difficult to see how their "ideas, dreams, and blood sacrifices" contributed to a Revolution that has "reverberated around the world among oppressed people down to the present day." Indeed, it seems obvious that the Indians would have been much better off if the Revolution had failed. Once the Americans gained independence, it is hard to see any alternative to the tragedy that occurred.

Does Nash believe that anyone could have stopped the land-hungry white farmers from spilling over the Appalachians into Indian territory? Although the eastern elites that Nash most dislikes tried, at least in their rhetoric, to protect the Indians' culture, their few voices of compassion meant nothing to the hordes of white settlers on the ground. The very local popular democracy coming out of the Revolution that Nash effusively praises made any federal resistance to the westward movement of the white settlers impossible. Nash never seems to appreciate that the "genocidal ... land-crazed frontiersmen" whom he condemns were some of the very same people whom he celebrates throughout as the poor pugnacious Scots-Irish westerners standing up to all those rich effete easterners.

FOR THE BLACK SLAVES AND THE Revolution, the irony is equally powerful. For slaves in the North the Revolution was beneficial, for it set slavery on the road to abolition, often from pressure from blacks themselves. But southern slaves would have been far better off with a British victory. They might have been freed in 1834, when Britain abolished slavery in its empire, instead of having to wait until the Civil War. During the course of the Revolution, as Nash superbly shows, tens of thousands of slaves (these numbers are now contested) flocked to the British lines in search of freedom. In fact, before the Civil War the British army was the greatest instrument of emancipation in American history.

Nash is especially angry that the revolutionaries let slip the best opportunity to eliminate slavery entirely from the country. He admits that the obstacles were formidable, but he insists that "inspired leadership" from the "national heroes" could have overcome them—a rather ironic statement in light of Nash's habitual contempt for the possibility of such national heroes doing anything positive. He mentions in particular the lack of leadership by Washington and Franklin, which is surprising, since both men actually did try to end slavery. Washington's experience in freeing his slaves in his will shows us how difficult such action was in the South in the late 1790s. He had to keep the will secret, for by 1799 his desire to free his slaves flew in the face of everyone around him, including apparently even his wife.

Historians these days are emphasizing the centrality of slavery to the early republic, perhaps too much so. The revolutionaries did not pay as much attention to slavery as we understandably wish they would have. They put a lot of confidence in the elimination of the

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slave trade promised for 1808, and they lived with the illusion that slavery would naturally die away. Oliver Ellsworth, the third chief justice of the Supreme Court, declared that "as population increases, poor labourers will be so plenty as to render slaves useless. Slavery in time will not be a speck in our country."

Many of the leading opponents of slavery, such as the wealthy southern gentleman John Laurens and the New England Federalist Theodore Sedgwick, were exactly the sorts of aristocratic upper-class types whom Nash dislikes. Those supporting slavery in Pennsylvania were precisely those Scots-Irish Presbyterian radicals whom Nash had earlier praised for writing such a popular constitution. He does not seem to realize that democracy and local popular control were not good for the causes of anti-slavery and the decent treatment of the native peoples.

Someone once said that all history is ironic, except when it is tragic. But Nash has no appreciation of these wise words; it is not in his temperament. He has no sense of irony or tragedy; he is all anger and indignation. Strangely, he stops his book in 1785 and does not apply his neo-Progressive scheme to the writing of the Constitution of 1787, the subject that in 1913 established the reputation of Charles Beard, the best known of the Progressive historians. By not discussing the origins of the Constitution, Nash avoids the embarrassment of having to deal with the modern multicultural claim that the Iroquois Indians made significant contributions to the idea of federalism and the making of the Constitution. Maybe Nash sensed that his interpretation of his "unknown Revolution" was already so overloaded with modern multicultural politics that adding this outlandish claim would finally sink it. ■

David Thomson
Dead Sunny Afternoons

THE GOLDEN WEST:
HOLLYWOOD STORIES
By Daniel Fuchs
(David R. Godine, 256 pp., $24.95)

THIS IS A VERY WELCOME book, which must help to restore the reputation of a modest man who had every reason, but little inclination, to rail against the way fate half-buried him. Yet there is some distance to go still, for if this collection of fact and fiction from Hollywood shows one of the cards in Daniel Fuchs's hand, there are others that also deserve attention. As John Updike makes clear in a sketchy but friendly introduction, Fuchs does not fight his own case very hard. He seems an obvious type at first: the Brooklyn novelist of high promise cast down by poor sales, saving his family with paychecks from Hollywood, that dire unliterary place, that Forest Lawn of culture. Except that Fuchs—who lived to a good old age: he died, age eighty-four, in 1993—says no, not at all, he had a fine time in the sun, he was happy. He liked picture work, and he is not so sure that those early novels were ever the real thing. He certainly hasn't got the patience to find out by reading them again.

Fuchs was born in 1909 in Brooklyn. Growing up, he knew Brooklyn, books, and not a lot else. He taught as a permanent substitute in the public schools for seven years, which precluded a few fringe benefits but encouraged the hope that the job was not really forever. And all the time he was writing: "A man sits in a room, writing novels. Nothing happens. They don't sell—four hundred copies apiece, the last one a few more. The reviews are scattered." There were three of these novels: *Summer in Williamsburg* (1934), *Homage to Blenholt* (1936), and *Low Company* (1937).

That was an age, of course, in which publishers persevered with fiction. In the same 1930s, Faulkner was tottering in and out of print, and one day Faulkner and Fuchs would meet in Hollywood. Twice in Fuchs's lifetime, in fact, his novels had their shot. They came back in the 1960s as *The Williamsburg Trilogy*, with snatches from those reviews printed on the jackets. They did better in the 1960s; I suppose the Depression era still had a little intellectual glamour attached to it. *Commentary* was very partial to Daniel Fuchs and may have been relieved to think that his Hollywood career was over. But after *Jeanne Eagels*, in 1957, written with another novelist, John Fante, there is not much else. So Irving Howe praised the novels and they did better than they had the first time out.

HOW ARE THOSE BOOKS, APART from out of print now, and steadfastly dedicated to impoverished lives? Pretty good, I think; though I have to admit that impoverished, settled lives seem quaint now. Someone at Godine told me that they would like to bring the novels back into print. I daresay half a dozen publishers would "like" to bring them back into print. But liking doesn't get it done anymore. Four hundred copies of a novel now is a royalty of maybe $1,000, and the writer can get more than that for a holiday piece on Cozumel, plus a bit of a tan. And these days, being murdered in Cozumel interests readers more than being a teacher in Brooklyn. Aging novelists need scandal as a last hope—but their bodies aren't up to it. We no longer rescue our lost novels—and we cannot be sure we are publishing the best new ones.

Anyway, Daniel Fuchs is in no state to go on *Charlie Rose* and mutter a few stories about George Raft or Ida Lupino, or let aged suntan have its moment. But even if he were still alive, he was too matter-of-fact for any publisher to get his teeth into. Charlie Rose seeks the desperate, taut shyness of those who know that they are ravishing, or killers. But Fuchs would not get very edgy with this kind of candor, which I take from a piece he wrote for *Commentary* in 1989: "At bottom I know the books are not first class and I privately wonder at the acclaim. The books are fine. I wrote about the restless Americanized sons of their immigrant fathers, and the novels have a good tenement-house yeastiness and sense of life in them, but I won't reread them (I have never reread them) because the flat print of the pages will only sicken and disappoint me."

Long after he had quit his teaching job, and even after the big hit of his career, *Love Me or Leave Me* (1955), for which he won an Oscar, Fuchs was

David Thomson is the author, most recently, of THE WHOLE EQUATION: A HISTORY OF HOLLYWOOD *(Knopf).*

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quietly looking to avert disappointment. Friends came out West, visiting from Brooklyn and the past, and they wondered how much Danny got paid for *Love Me or Leave Me*. "I demur, tip the conversation, and we talk about something else. Why do we never like to tell what we get paid? Because it's seldom as much as they think it is, and they will be disappointed. Because it's too much, lavish beyond anything they earn in two years or three, and they will only be sick again."

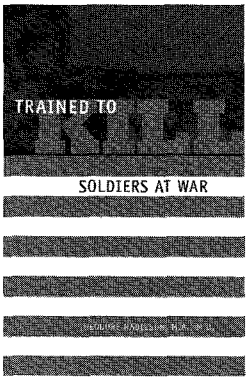
Fuchs took his wife with him to Los Angeles, and there would be two sons. I can easily believe that in 1955, the year of *Love Me or Leave Me*, he got $50,000 for the picture, maybe a touch more: he did double duty, supplying the story (that's what won the Oscar) and joining with Isobel Lennart on the screenplay (nominated, too, but beaten out by Paddy Chayefsky and *Marty*, which is sort of second-generation yeasty). And in 1955, I daresay, a full-time teacher in Brooklyn would have been lucky to make $10,000 a year. Nowadays in Brooklyn, perhaps they earn $50,000, but then sometimes Fuchs's present-day followers can pick up $200,000 a week for doctoring someone else's script. ("Doctoring," by the way, is an interesting term: it can mean making better, but it is also a common prelude to death.)

Fuchs had an offer, a thirteen-week contract, to go West, and he took it, but there was no reason for anyone on either side of the deal to think that he was a sure thing. In 1937, when he made the move, as now, yeastiness was less urgently sought in the movies than pep, fizz, general carbonation. Movies were likely to have bold declaratory titles and crisis-ridden plots, like *Love Me or Leave Me*, whereas in Brooklyn and in real life it was all too often the case that people didn't love each other but stayed around just the same, and life was as flat and sour as old beer. The great American novels, you might say, are about the eternal and insoluble enmities of life, whereas the great American movies are about a confrontation that will allow for a clean, happy ending.

So Fuchs arrived in Los Angeles just before the brightest moment of the Golden Age, but also just before the baleful vision of Nathanael West's *The Day of the Locust* and West's death in a car crash. F. Scott Fitzgerald was publishing the Pat Hoby stories, which are a warning to all would-be writers, even if Fitzgerald himself ignored it. Joe Gillis in *Sunset Blvd.* was only ten years away, without a car, a script, or a breathing apparatus in Norma Desmond's pool. William Holden, who played Gillis, was only nine years younger than Fuchs, and Holden made his acting debut just a year after Fuchs arrived. And Gillis, if you recall, has some vivid short stories in his past, stuff that the script editor remembers as she squashes his desperate efforts in 1950. Joe had sold out.

ALL OF WHICH COULD BE preparation for Fuchs as a story of personal ruin. And like almost any novelist esteemed at *Commentary* when the magazine really cared about such things, Fuchs does get an early inkling of the Kafkaesque comedy into which he has wandered. He occupies his studio office, waiting for an assignment. Then the studio parking-lot attendant calls to ask why he isn't using his assigned space. I

Taking freedom seriously



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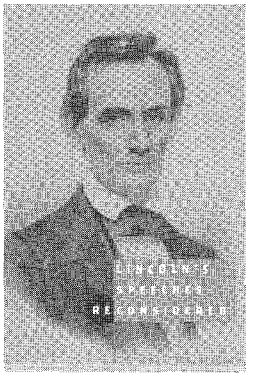

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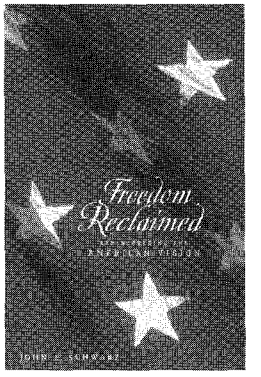

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have no car, explains Fuchs. The man is bewildered. Then a producer asks for a treatment on a story called *No Bread to Butter*. Fuchs jumps at the opportunity and hands in the treatment in a week. Wow, sigh the other writers, much too quick. The producer never responds. The vice president of production calls and says, "Don't you think it's time you showed up at the lot?" Fuchs has done two weeks solid and he's nearly in tears, but the parking vacancy tells a story that cannot be denied.

Another producer puts him on researching frontier stories, then tells him that there is no money. One more producer puts him on *Dark Island*, a remake, working from the old version. Did you read the script? he asks Danny a few days later. Danny has, but he doesn't like it. So, thinking not to offend the producer, he asks him what he thinks of it. "Why ask me?" retorts the producer. "I haven't read the script." A month later Fuchs finds another man typing at his desk. That's how he knows he's been dropped.

Those misadventures are all in "A Hollywood Diary," which ran in *The New Yorker* in 1938, and it is still as crisp as a fresh death certificate, a souvenir of one's own nullity. This is gallows humor, Hollywood style, and Fuchs does it expertly, at a time when he still recalled Brooklyn wit and had enough of it left to see that the studio system was a great artifice of absurdity and noir opportunity. Indeed, an essentially modest, unambitious man such as Fuchs (he was so much less apocalyptic than Nathanael West) makes you realize how far in the 1930s and 1940s the wise spirit of the East saw the fantasyland available in the West, grasped the ways it sweetly erased so many standards of Eastern cultivation, difficulty, and moral failure and went along with them amiably enough. After all, the great drug in the Hollywood fantasy—spooned up for audiences, stars, and writers alike—was that no one needed to fail. L.A.: losing allowed, or adjusted.

There is a wistful voice here from time to time, but it leans more toward the sadness of squandered days than the disaster of forsaken souls. As late as 1989 (when the movie business had turned very bad and Fuchs was out of it), he would observe that

> critics and bystanders who concern themselves with the plight of the Hollywood screenwriters don't know the real grief that goes with the job. The worst is the dreariness in the dead sunny afternoons when you consider the misses, the scripts you've labored on and had high hopes for and that wind up on the shelf, when you think of the mountains of failed screenplays on the shelf at the different movie companies; in all my time at the studios I managed to get my name on a little more than a dozen pictures, most unmemorable, one a major success.

A Kafka at Columbia would have seen that the writers' building (with its passing games of pinochle, its bottles in the drawers, its flirty typists) was not so much a factory for stories as a growing morgue for scripts that would not be made. They are still there in every Hollywood office, quickly bound, with the titles handwritten in caps on the spines. The titles are as urgent, as imploring, or as threatening as *Love Me or Leave Me*. They are cries of immediate outrage and desire, the popping bubbles of frantic carbonation. Here are some of them—see if you can tell the ones that were made from the ones that are still waiting: *Has Anybody Seen My Gal*; *I Wake Up Screaming*; *My Sweet Dread*; *There's a Body Outside*; *The Moon in the Gutter*; *Six Seconds of Silence*; *The Earth Dies Screaming*; *Pretty Good; Pretty Woman*; *Pretty, Pretty, Come to Me*. The decades pass, those shelves grow longer, and this untested mystery hangs over the "business": might the films that were not made have been better than the ones that were made? (Or realized, as the French say.) As I say, it's Kafka territory, and the charm of Daniel Fuchs—in the last hour of the office day, perhaps—is in telling stories from that forlorn house of fiction.

MORE OR LESS, HE LIKED IT out there. He liked seeing his family grow up in better-than-Brooklyn comfort and in a lot more sunshine. Please don't overlook the local light. If you are going to stay sane in Los Angeles, you need to appreciate it and all its wonders. "When I came to California twenty-five years ago, I was taken with the immense, brilliantly clean sunshine that hovered over everything," he writes. There's a grim wisdom that says, oh dear yes, but see what industry and exhaust have done to that hovering. Still, California has the most deodorized emissions in the world, and it still has days and twilights that are so beautiful that you see why moviemaking keeps trying to get it.

Fuchs is subtler than he acts. In "Triplicate," from 1979, one of the best pieces in this wonderful volume, he has a character say this:

> "What people don't understand about this place is that the whole idea is not to make great pictures but to enjoy life in the sun. They keep asking for works of art, but the picture-making from the beginning was secondary, starting with the Fairbanks-Pickford days when they entertained visiting royalty and statesmen. That's why the pictures had their worldwide success. They were made without strain by happy, unneurotic people who were busy having a good time and who worked naturally out of their instincts, and audiences everywhere were intelligent enough to perceive this and treasure it. It's the climate, the desert. It comes with the locality."

There's more than wisdom there. Let Brooklyn look after the art (and its modest sales), because out here in the light we have something else: call it entertainment. Fuchs stayed in Hollywood because it turned out that he was pretty good at visual storytelling, because he was phlegmatic enough to work for guys who were not always the best judges of what was pretty good and what was not, and because he believed in the show. He could imagine the early nights in Brooklyn and the horrible winters and he could see people hurrying into the theaters, as humble, bright, beaten, and hopeful as the people in Hopper paintings. He knew something could happen in the dark they found:

> I used to stand in front of the theater and look at their loose, yielding faces, and wonder what kind of pictures could be given to them; if it was possible to reach them in any important, meaningful way; if it even made sense to try. And yet, once they were inside the movie house, a transformation occurred. Others have remarked on it. In the dark, forming a mass, they lost their individual disabilities and insufficiencies. They became informed; they became larger than themselves; a separate entity appeared, an entity that was knowing and complete.

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And that's the moment to say that one card missing from this book, and it's an ace, is the real quality of Fuchs's writing for the movies. John Updike stresses *Love Me or Leave Me*, and that's understandable: it has a feisty match-up of James Cagney and Doris Day (and Updike is the best protector of Doris Day on the page); it won an Oscar and had industry success. It's pretty good, and worth seeing fifty years later, even if some old pros might say, well, writing a musical is kinda soft, isn't it—all you do for the next three pages is write "They sing the song."

Still, if I may say so, *Love Me or Leave Me* (I love typing out that title, and I hear Doris Day, as Ruth Etting, every time—music by Walter Donaldson and lyrics by Gus Kahn) is nowhere near as good as *The Hard Way* (1942) or *Criss Cross* (1949). The first was a Warner Brothers picture, and was based on some real star: it is about how the career of ingenue Joan Leslie is made by her very determined older sister Ida Lupino. Jerry Wald and Irwin Shaw had been writers on it before Fuchs, but he gives a nice account of how the picture evolved—of how much luck aided talent; but you can tell what the odd story meant to him, and how a group of people came together (dominated, I suspect, by Lupino) to do something, well, pretty special.

And then there's *Criss Cross*, my favorite, a lovely broad daylight noir set and shot in the Bunker Hill area of L.A. Burt Lancaster is the likeable chump. Yvonne De Carlo is the forgivable slut. And Dan Duryea is the ingratiating villain Slim Dundee—now that name is movie-writing. There is even a dance-floor scene (to driving Latin music) during which a pretty boy turns to the camera and it's the young Tony Curtis—and you can feel the world stirring and saying, Oooh, I like that! Robert Siodmak directed the picture, and it has a scene in a hospital that is truly a knockout of suspense, character, and timing. I wrote a piece about the film once, and I got a gentle letter back from Fuchs just before he died saying that he was happy I'd noticed a few things.

I COULDN'T GET THAT SCENE OUT OF my head as I read "West of the Rockies," which is really the center of this volume, and the biggest thing Fuchs ever did reaching for what you might call a Nathanael West voice. It is a novella, ninety pages here, and was published first by Knopf in 1971. I had never read it before. It turns out to be a classic portrait of an aging movie star—Adele Hogue, not quite a movie name—whose looks are slipping and whose mind is beginning to see that she has been a ghost for public amusement. It could be the thing that drove another Brooklyn boy, Norman Mailer, to do his book on Marilyn—and you feel that Adele might be a version of some great lady Danny was once soft on. The novella is pretty good on the woman, and generally quite admirable, except for the paragraphs that go on for pages and the way there really isn't very much that happens. There is not enough cutting and talking and shifting—the things Fuchs had the knack for on screen.

So I don't mean to say that we lost a great writer when Fuchs went West. I think he was always pretty good, and much happier, doing pictures. And the way things look now, our culture is going to keep some of his movies available long after it smiles politely if you ask about his books. Fuchs knew what was for the best, and he did good work for that heroic version of us and the crowd, the audience. Just consider the pictures, and the size of his audience.

I was thinking such thoughts when I happened to see J. M. Coetzee's review of Jay Parini's recent life of Faulkner in *The New York Review of Books*. Coetzee is rather disapproving of Faulkner in Hollywood, and surely such a case can be made. Faulkner had none of the "snappy" gifts that Fuchs had. He did not seem to notice the light; shaded rooms and binge drinking were his hobbies. Fuchs worked with him a bit, couldn't reach him, but guessed at a "silent, secret tumult" going on inside. That much inner life was seldom a good thing in the studio system, and it actually works against suntan. (This is not commonly known: worriers do not tan!) Faulkner is quoted by Coetzee on how movie work may have spoiled his style. Now, I love Faulkner's style, but I find the idea that anything affected it beyond his head and the booze rather funny. There is evidence here and there that Faulkner could write a good movie line, or even a scene, without going out of his mind or losing a masterpiece. And there is, I think, something a little snooty and humorless, something

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that could have made Fuchs smile, in Coetzee's conclusion that "nothing he [Faulkner] wrote for the movies proved worth rescuing."

To which I must respond that so far *To Have and Have Not* and *The Big Sleep* have not needed rescuing, because any night of your life someone is watching them and having a grand time. (Though I'm not altogether sure that Faulkner did very much on either except get credit or hang around.) There are other films Faulkner touched, and there may be scenes in which scholarship could locate a finger or a hand of the master for a moment. But there's no need. Faulkner may just have been there in the office, passing the bottle and looking at Lauren Bacall and wondering who was going to get her first. Call it mood. He was a figure in the room, and Fuchs understands that in these situations that was enough. *The Hard Way* and *Criss Cross* are probably not as good as *To Have and Have Not* and *The Big Sleep*, but they are pretty good, and Daniel Fuchs is just as appealing as a fine cat curled up in the late afternoon sunshine. And as near as anyone can prove, sometimes the cat wrote some of the picture. ■

G.W. Bowersock
Tangled Roots

BABYLON, MEMPHIS, PERSEPOLIS: EASTERN CONTEXTS OF GREEK CULTURE
By Walter Burkert
(Harvard University Press, 178 pp., $22.95)

THE STUPENDOUS ACHIEVEMENTS of the Greeks of classical antiquity have long dazzled those who succeeded them. In philosophy, sculpture, architecture, drama, and oratory, later peoples could only aspire to the level of Plato, Praxiteles, Ictinus, Sophocles, or Demosthenes. Thucydides famously ascribed to Pericles a vision of Hellenism that instructed and encompassed the civilized world, and Athens appeared to be the first democracy on earth. Never mind that it was a democracy that depended upon slavery and excluded women. Never mind that the Greeks wrote their language in an alphabet that they borrowed from the Phoenicians. Their achievement was so irresistible that their culture overwhelmed even their conquerors, the Romans. As Horace put it succinctly in the time of Augustus, "Captured Greece took its victor captive." Generations of Western Europeans and their colonists everywhere have grown up with the idea that they are, in some profound way, the heirs of the Greeks.

The idea of a "Greek miracle" gathered force in Germany after the rapturous descriptions of Greek art by Winckelmann in the eighteenth century. It fueled the identification of Greek and German culture off and on throughout the nineteenth century. In England, a reaction against the gloomy and anticlerical view of decline in Gibbon's massive work on the Roman Empire led to a study of Greek history by George Grote that remains a masterpiece to this day. The Roman sources of Jeffersonian democracy and architecture never eclipsed their Greek roots. Americans particularly welcomed Greek exceptionalism, because of the strong exceptionalist strain in American self-awareness. There had never been a people like the Greeks, and there was none like the Americans. In both cases their origins through migration and immigration could be traced, but once they hit the soil that was to become their native soil, they developed, so it seemed, all on their own.

In the mid-1950s, Huntington Cairns, an influential lawyer whose intellectual pretensions earned him the nickname "the Sage," wrote to Sir Herbert Read that if the next generation failed to embrace Greek culture, "we are faced with re-barbarization." Yet that was precisely the time when two scholars were just beginning to chip away at the Greek monolith and gradually to redefine the Greek miracle. Mindful of the Near Eastern origins of the Greek alphabet, they looked outside Greece for other signs of Greek contact with alien cultures. They had Herodotus to help them, with a whole book of his *History* dedicated to the civilization of Egypt as well as a long narrative of the Greek struggle with Persia. They also had a growing body of astonishing texts from the Akkadians in Mesopotamia.

One of these two scholars, Martin West in England, went on to address these issues memorably in a book with the emblematic title *The East Face of Helicon*. The other, Walter Burkert in Switzerland, now returns to this theme, after several earlier works, in his new book. It is a fascinating and magisterial account of just how far we have moved away from Greek exceptionalism without in any way denigrating the achievement of the Greeks. In this respect, Burkert's work, like West's, is far removed from the sensational attempt by Martin Bernal, in *Black Athena*, simply to transfer the originality of the Greeks to their Near Eastern predecessors. Burkert mentions this book solely to make a point: "Polemics are not worthwhile."

THROUGHOUT HIS LONG AND distinguished career, Burkert has been an acute interpreter of religion, ritual, and society in the ancient world. Many a sober scholar has come to grief in the devouring bogs of ritual and cult. The intersection of extravagant mythology and bloody rituals can reduce even the most disciplined mind to jelly, as any reader of Frazer or Dumézil will know. The exploits of Harry Potter are far more plausible than some of the rites ascribed to the ancient Mesopotamians or Greeks. Burkert showed an uncanny ability to keep his sanity in his first two books, one on Pythagorean folk wisdom in comparison with rational learning and the other on blood sacrifice. Unlike West, who chose his own brilliant title, Burkert has had to put up with inept English versions of his brilliant German titles. His marvelous *Weisheit und Wissenschaft* was converted into the flat and somewhat misleading *Lore and Science*. His *Homo Necans*, which means *Man as Killer*, fared a bit better, since the untranslated Latin remained its title, but this was hardly a boon for marketing. Almost in spite of the austerity of his presence in the Anglophone world, Burkert has,

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along with Martin West, cast a bright spotlight upon the east face of Helicon.

He initially approached this topic with the title *The Orientalizing Epoch in Greek Religion and Literature*, an important German monograph of 1984. He subsequently revised that for an English-language volume, *The Orientalizing Revolution*, which appeared in 1992. In the wake of Edward Said's powerful assault on the concept of Orientalism, it has become prudent to avoid provocation on this score; but this is irrelevant to what Burkert is trying to prove, although "orientalizing" continues to appear conspicuously in his text. The subtitle of this new book, which is an English version of Italian lectures delivered in Venice in 1996, is "Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture." But the main title, simply naming Babylon, Memphis, and Persepolis, is unfortunate and diverges for no obvious reason from the original, "From Homer to the Magi." Any reader expecting extensive discussion of those three ancient cities will be sadly disappointed. These cities stand in for Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Persia—which admittedly would not have sat very well in a book title.

AFTER A BRIEF AND CURSORY review of the Phoenician origins of the Greek alphabet, Burkert turns precisely to Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Persia, and in so doing he moves from a discussion of the Homeric poems to the Persian magi by way of Egypt, Dionysus, and Orpheus. He spends little time on the surprising longevity of the idea of a Greek miracle, but it has to be said that the seeds of revisionism were already apparent in the nineteenth century. Even before that, connections between Homer and the Hebrew Bible had been noticed. A few scholars of classical antiquity, such as the formidable Eduard Meyer, had called attention to the Near Eastern contexts of Greek culture, but his voice was not heeded as much as it might have been if he had not been so ardent a supporter of the Kaiser in World War I and a fierce enemy of the Americans.

The Western world was reluctant to give up the uniqueness of the Greeks. But in the nineteenth century the dramatic discovery of a Mesopotamian epic about the flood (*Gilgamesh*) and another on the creation (*Enuma Elish*) alerted perceptive readers, including none other than William Ewart Gladstone, to striking parallels with the Homeric epics

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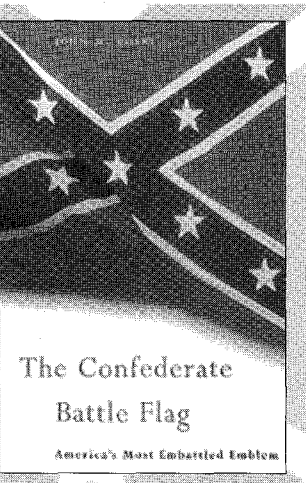

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(to say nothing of the Hebrew Bible). These works, written in Akkadian cuneiform, immediately furnished an important antecedent for Homer in both style and substance. The use of epithets, repeated lines, depictions of divinity, and much else resembled the Homeric poems. Gladstone was quick to notice that when Hera tells Zeus, in a famous scene of deception in the *Iliad* known as *Dios Apate*, that she is going to Oceanus, "origin of the gods," and to Tethys, their "mother," she is echoing the opening of the *Enuma Elish*, in which Apsu and Tiamat are said to have mixed their waters together to give birth to the gods.

The publication in 1969 of *Atrahasis*, an old Akkadian epic known previously only through insignificant fragments, reinforced the connection with Homer, and for that matter with *Gilgamesh*, since it contained an earlier version of the flood. At the beginning of *Atrahasis* there is a division of the cosmos among three gods. One is allotted heaven, a second earth, and a third the sea. No Homerist could miss the parallel with Book 15 of the *Iliad*, in which Poseidon asserts, "When we threw the lots I received the gray sea as my permanent abode, Hades drew the murky darkness, Zeus however drew the wide sky of brightness and clouds; the earth is common to all, and spacious Olympus." Despite the difference in the assignment of earth, the basic structure is similar, and the distribution follows from drawing lots. Burkert observes: "No other passage in Homer comes so close to being a translation of the Akkadian epic.... One might still believe this to be a deceptive coincidence, were it not for the special context of *Dios Apate* where many different clues come together to point to the oriental tradition; in this case, the coincidence hypothesis becomes the most improbable option." This is an apt illustration of the good sense that Burkert maintains throughout his work.

When Burkert moves from Mesopotamia to Egypt, he advances into one of the most contentious and obscure topics of ancient religion. This is a mystery religion, concerned with initiation and afterlife, that is known as Orphism. It takes its name from Orpheus, the singer who charmed animals and made a famous visit to the underworld in search of Eurydice. The texts associated with his name evidently have some connection with cults of Dionysus, particularly in their more ecstatic form. Moreover, they appear to encapsulate promises and prohibitions known to Egyptian religion, in which Osiris is linked with Dionysus.

The whole subject is fraught with confusion, and it has engendered scholarly controversy between rationalists and mystics for several centuries. The great classical scholar Wilamowitz poured scorn on Orphism as a serious topic, even though Johann Jakob Bachofen had felt no qualms, in 1867, in reconstructing Orphic teachings about immortality on the basis of a vase from Italy. The study of Orphism has been attended by discoveries no less sensational and mystifying than the religion itself. Burkert provides sure and steady guidance through this theological chamber of wonders.

In a delectable example of revealed religion, Orphic theology turned up on gold plates found in tombs. A text from southern Italy, made known in 1836, described the underworld with white cypress, a forbidden spring, and a Lake of Memory, to be approached only with a password. In 1879 more texts appeared near Tarentum, with the puzzling phrase "Kid I fell into the milk." No one could fault Burkert for his plangent query, "What does this mean?" In 1974, the oldest of the gold plates turned up, again in Italy, with a date of about 400 B.C.E. This material is therefore not Hellenistic or late antique, as Burkert rightly notes, and it explicitly designates Dionysiac initiates on their way to the underworld. More gold plates have poured out, from Thessaly, Sicily, and again from Thessaly, as well as from Greece proper, Macedonia, Crete, and Lesbos. Meanwhile, graffiti on bone plates, found in 1978 at Olbia in the Ukraine, bore the word "Orphikoi." This is precisely where Herodotus had reported a scene of Dionysiac mysteries. So the Orphics are guaranteed now for the fifth century B.C.E.

The plot thickened still more when the text of twenty-six columns of a carbonized papyrus scroll from the cremation of a rich Macedonian at Derveni became known, in an illicit but serviceable publication in 1982. (The discovery occurred in 1962, but certain scholars grew tired of waiting.) The papyrus may be dated to approximately 300 B.C.E., and it contains a pre-Socratic commentary on a hexameter poem describing a theogony, an account of the origins of the gods, ascribed to Orpheus himself. Fragments of the poem are quoted and glossed. Orpheus begins with a famous admonition to secrecy, of which Plato had been aware: "Close the doors, you uninitiated." Then the theogony gets under way, as Night gives birth to Heaven (Uranus), and Heaven becomes the first king. After Heaven comes Kronos, who takes away Heaven's kingship, but Zeus succeeds Kronos. At this point Zeus "heard oracles from his father" and went to a sanctuary of Night, who gave him "all the oracles which afterwards he was to put into effect." Having heard these oracles, Zeus does something utterly unparalleled in literature, in mythology, or indeed in the imagination of anyone: "He swallowed the phallus [of the king Uranus] who first had ejaculated the brilliance of heaven." Many centuries later Diogenes Laertius, under the Roman Empire, wrote that Orpheus had attributed to the gods disgusting acts, "which even certain people commit but seldom with the organ of speech." Diogenes clearly knew this text.

It takes a scholar like Burkert to keep a level head in writing about something so bizarre. With unerring scholarship, lightly worn, he leads the reader to the conclusion that Uranus's ejaculation points unequivocally to an Egyptian tradition—in fact, "to the mainline of Egyptian cosmogonies." Having staked out the Egyptian context, Burkert can then move forward in the Derveni theogony with other Egyptian parallels. His interpretation of Orpheus's unexampled report of Zeus as "the only one" draws him into Egyptian iconography in which many gods are combined into one figure, so as to suggest the theological idea of unity in multiplicity. He concludes that "the text of Orpheus, as quoted in the Derveni papyrus, is the verbalization of this Egyptian idea of the composite god. There is nothing comparable in the early Greek evidence."

The thought world of the Derveni papyrus is so alien to most of us, certainly to those who believed themselves the cultural heirs of the Greeks, that Greek culture in its complexity needs to be wholly re-imagined. What Burkert has brought together in writing about Orphism, from a wealth of new material, would have left Wilamowitz aghast, and at the very least it demonstrates beyond

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any doubt that the extravagant mysticism that many had wanted to ascribe to the overheated pieties of late antiquity, such as the Neoplatonism of Julian the Apostate, had actually been there from the days of Pericles and the Parthenon.

THE PERSIAN CONTRIBUTION to Greek culture in this age was equally potent, if a little less startling than the Egyptian one. It consists in the spread of Zoroastrianism, to which Burkert devotes his final chapter. After the fall of Sardis to the Achaemenid Persians in 547 B.C.E., a substantial part of the Hellenized world outside mainland Greece became subject to Persian rule for two centuries. The Persian attempt to take the mainland in the early fifth century brought the enemy closer to home than the Greeks had ever expected; and if they pushed back the forces of Xerxes, the close encounter never left their minds or their historical record. Aeschylus's *The Persians* is a moving reflection of this momentous confrontation of two great cultures. But he could not have guessed that the Greeks of Asia Minor were to live under Persian domination for many generations.

Burkert asked the obvious question about Greece and Persia: "What was the result of such a long coexistence?" He observes that some classicists tend to answer, "None at all." With a series of telling examples, Burkert shows how powerful the influence was in the classical period. Zoroastrianism is best known to us as the religion of Sassanid Persia in the third to seventh centuries C.E., but there is no doubt that the eponym Zarathustra belongs long before that, somewhere between 1000 B.C.E. and the early sixth century B.C.E. He was known to the Greeks as Zoroastres, as he is still today to opera lovers as Sarastro. His dual system of opposed good and evil is reflected in a few early Greek texts. A cuneiform inscription of Darius mentions Ahura Mazda, the good force, as bestowing the kingship upon him. Burkert points out the strange Persian title, Megabyxos, for the high priest of Artemis at Ephesus, and rightly sees this as a reflection of the Persian occupation. The emergence of the word *magos* in Greek from Persian *magush* is, as Burkert puts it, "incontrovertible evidence for Iranian influence in Greek." The word went on to have a rich semantic life in Greek, sometimes indicating priests or exegetes in Persian worship but sometimes magicians or wizards. Hence the magi in Bethlehem and our word "magic."

ONCE AGAIN BURKERT BRINGS us to the Derveni papyrus and the theogony of Orpheus, since a part of the work that became accessible only in 1997 refers explicitly to the Persian magi in this already Egyptianized Greek text. The magi appear with the power to move demons, and they make blood sacrifices "as if giving atonement." Incantations serve to clear out demons in the process of accessing gods. Rites with libations of water and milk are, as Burkert notes, similar to the cult of the dead, although not identical, and one is reminded of the Persian queen in Aeschylus's *Persians* pouring milk, honey, water, and wine at the tomb of Darius. This infusion into the Derveni text of Persian magi who have not been contaminated with the idea of magic or wizardry leads Burkert into consideration of the pre-Socratic philosophical universe in which Diogenes of Apollonia, whom the Derveni author knew, made *pneuma*, or air, into a piece of the divine in all of us—a doctrine adapted by Democritus to his atomic theory. Democritus wrote that men who could speak stretched up their hands to the heavens and called the whole of it Zeus. This comes close to the Derveni papyrus on "the whole ... called Zeus." And this in turn takes us straight to Herodotus, who asserted that it was the magi who "called the whole circle of heaven Zeus."

The Iranian presence in Hellenism did not go away after the satraps of the Persian shah-in-shah left Asia Minor. One of the most remarkable inscriptions to have come out of Sardis in the time of the Roman Empire is on a stone with incised letters from the middle of the second century C.E. The inscription begins with a date in the thirty-ninth year of King Artaxerxes—a Persian ruler from five or six hundred years earlier (depending on which Artaxerxes is meant). The dedicant of the text, who set up a statue of Zeus, has a Persian name, Droaphernes, and is clearly a Persian. The inscription alludes to fire rituals and mysteries, all of Persian character. Accordingly, as the great French scholar Louis Robert pointed out, this Zeus is none other than Ahura Mazda. So here we see an extraordinary survival: under the high Roman Empire someone extracted this ancient text from the local archives and had it inscribed conspicuously in Sardis. We can only assume that in that great city, with its well-known Greek and Jewish populations, there was also a community of Greek-speaking people who remained devoted to the old Persian religion.

The Greek miracle lay not in a Hellenism that was exclusively Greek, but rather in its transforming embrace of Near Eastern myth and thought. No one else ever achieved what the Greeks achieved, but they did not do it alone. And Walter Burkert is the modern magus who has brought us this revelation. ■

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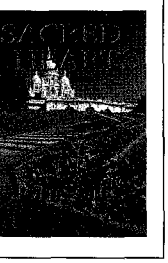

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IRBIL DIARIST

Iraq 101

When Jalal Talabani assumed the presidency of Iraq in April, the streets of Irbil, in the country's Kurdish-controlled north, filled in celebration, and most of my students decided to skip that afternoon's English class. "This is a new beginning," Jihad, one of the few who did make it to school, told me. Yes, but the beginning of what, exactly? The beginning of the end of sectarian and ethnic conflict in Iraq? The beginning of the end of Kurdish uneasiness with their Iraqi identity? Or, perhaps just as likely, the beginning of the end of Iraq?

Not long after this, in a course I was teaching on U.S. history at the University of Salahaddin, I introduced a question of shared concern to both Americans and Kurds: Do federalism and diversity make a country weaker, or can they, over extended periods of time, in fact make a country stronger? The class included a handful of Islamists who saw in both me and the United States everything evil, but most had welcomed me to their country, and almost all had welcomed U.S. intervention in Iraq. One of the more likable and engaged students gave a quick response that anticipated the answers of the majority of the group. "Pluralism and diversity might be part of what make America good," he surmised, "but they are not good for Iraq." "They might be good for Iraq," he added with a slight chuckle, "if the rest of Iraq was all Kurds."

Two Kurdish security officials outside one of the university's dusty classrooms advanced even more blunt opinions. A television in the corner was showing images of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib. Making use of my limited Kurdish, I grimaced and said "*boshnea, hoshnea*"—not good, not nice. One of the guards smiled at me and shook his head, "*Zurhosha, zurbosha*"—very nice, very good. The Americans, he asserted, screwed up at that prison all right; they hadn't gone far enough.

Hardened from years of war though the Kurds may be, neither the student nor the bodyguard was eager to see more bloodshed. It is of limited value to compare historical injustices but fair to say that a long-oppressed and brutalized people, as the Kurds were under Saddam Hussein, cannot be expected to abandon the biases they have adopted over years of hardship.

Just that sort of progress may very well be in their best interest, however, and it is certainly in the best interest of the American vision of a united and stable Iraq. In the long run, port access through Basra and a role in the larger Iraqi market might be better economically for the Kurds than independence as a state landlocked by confrontational neighbors. In the short run, both the political balance provided by the more secular Kurds and their continued receptiveness to the U.S. presence are useful in developing an Iraq that Bush officials—or whoever follows them—might proudly leave behind.

Around the time of my exchange with the security officials, a State Department program officer visited the president of the university. The officer asked after the number of buildings and students at the school's various colleges and sought to arrange a lunchtime visit for a prominent American writer. He did not, however, ask if the university was offering courses on federalism or sponsoring discussions on the benefits of diversity. There was no discussion of the best way to encourage the new generation to be optimistic about Iraq and not simply Kurdistan. In between twice asking after the enrollment, the official found it worthwhile to correct the president's use of the German "V" sound in his pronunciation of the name of the former deputy secretary of defense. "*Wolf*-o-witz. *Wolf*-o-witz," he said in a tone and rhythm appropriate for teaching phonetics to an ill-behaved student.

The battle of ideas, the fight for hearts and minds, must be fought like the war against the Iraqi insurgents—requiring intelligence and waged day by day, door to door. Removed from abstract concepts of culture and modernity and the overarching reach of Al Jazeera and its U.S.-funded counterpart Al Hurra, the war of ideas is also fought in inane meetings like this one between an American bureaucrat and an Iraqi administrator. Front lines are in the basements of mosques, in the classrooms of colleges, and in every face-to-face meeting between Iraqis and Americans. Knowledge and respect are often the best weapons.

In Mosul, conflict between Islamists and moderate students has plagued Nineveh University, once one of Iraq's most prestigious institutions. In Iraqi Kurdistan, less than 50 miles to the east, the war of ideas is not about the role of Islam but the more precise problem of Kurdish-Arab relations. While American officials in Iraq have emphasized a political balance of power, they have established few structures through which the country's dominant groups can begin to discuss injustices of the past. There are no school programs furthering the idea of the "new" Iraq, nor are there new textbooks in the northern universities that acknowledge Kurdish-Arab tensions or highlight the value of cooperation. Nothing is being done to convince Kurds on the street that Arab Iraqis should be given a chance to be trusted, and the security situation in central Iraq allows for little to be done to reconstruct the negative image of Kurds that Saddam helped foster for 30 years.

It is probably neither possible nor appropriate to force onto Kurds the belief that, in the new Iraq, Kurdish-Arab relations will be different. It can be the U.S. role, however—true both to our interests in Iraq and our values as Americans—to introduce the idea that change is indeed possible, and that, in the right setting, the mistakes and prejudices of the past can be exchanged for shared interests and mutual respect. We cannot say that it must be so, but, through support of local universities and schools and sensitivity to local politicians and media, we could introduce the idea that it might be so. For a start, this means no longer pretending that Iraq is one nation. And it means beginning instead to set up the extra-political structures—the spaces for teaching, conversation, and forgiveness—that might, against the odds, make it so. **IAN KLAUS**

Ian Klaus taught English and history in Iraqi Kurdistan until earlier this month.

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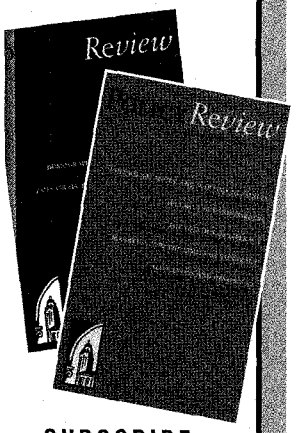

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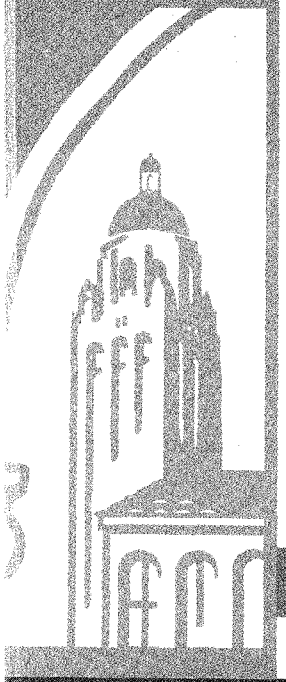

In the new issue of *Policy Review*

Checks, Balances, and Wartime Detainees

The Supreme Court mediates as Congress abdicates

In the end, the enemy combatant cases—at least so far—stand as a kind of case study of the consequence of abandoning to the adversarial litigation system a sensitive policy debate in which powerful and legitimate constitutional concerns animate both sides. By nearly universal agreement, these cases were submitted to common-law decision making in the face of almost-as-universal agreement that the extant body of law did not fully address the novel conditions of the war on terrorism. As a result, . . . the courts were left to split the difference between polar arguments to which few Americans would actually sign on and which should not have defined the terms of the discussion. It needn't have been this way. But until Congress assumes responsibility for crafting a system to handle enemy combatants, the regime necessarily will remain a crude, judge-made hybrid.

—Benjamin Wittes

Security beyond Borders

An unheralded success in transatlantic relations

Neither U.S. nor EU political leaders have engaged the attention of their political elites with their counter-terrorist agenda. Officials on both sides of the Atlantic, well aware of the overall turbulence of the transatlantic relationship, have been at pains to keep foreign policy and counter-terrorist issues separate and to address problems within government channels rather than negotiating via the media. But while this approach undoubtedly has brought substantial benefits, it does have the downside of failing to educate either the public or the political elites about the true state of affairs.

—Leslie S. Lebl

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